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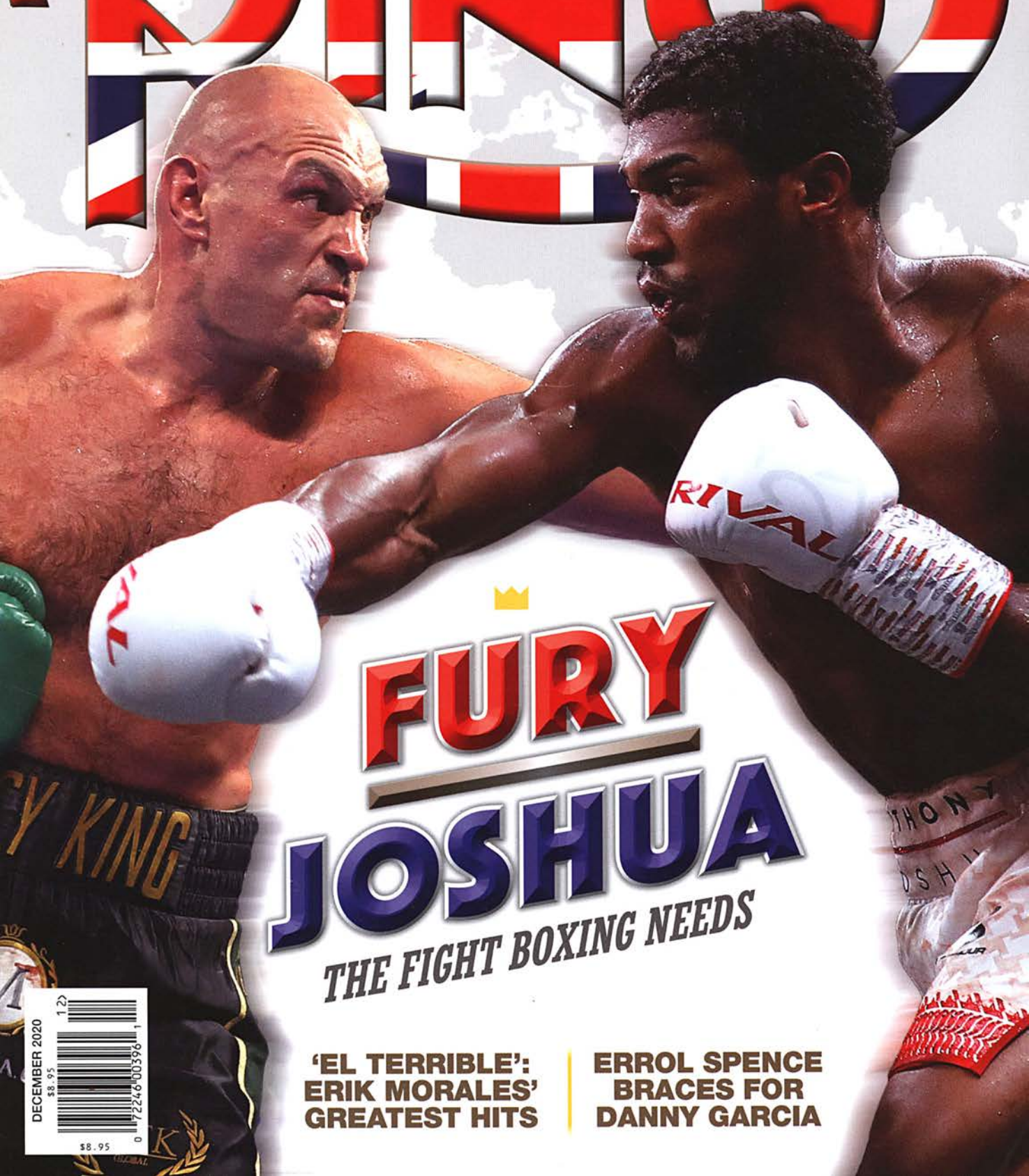

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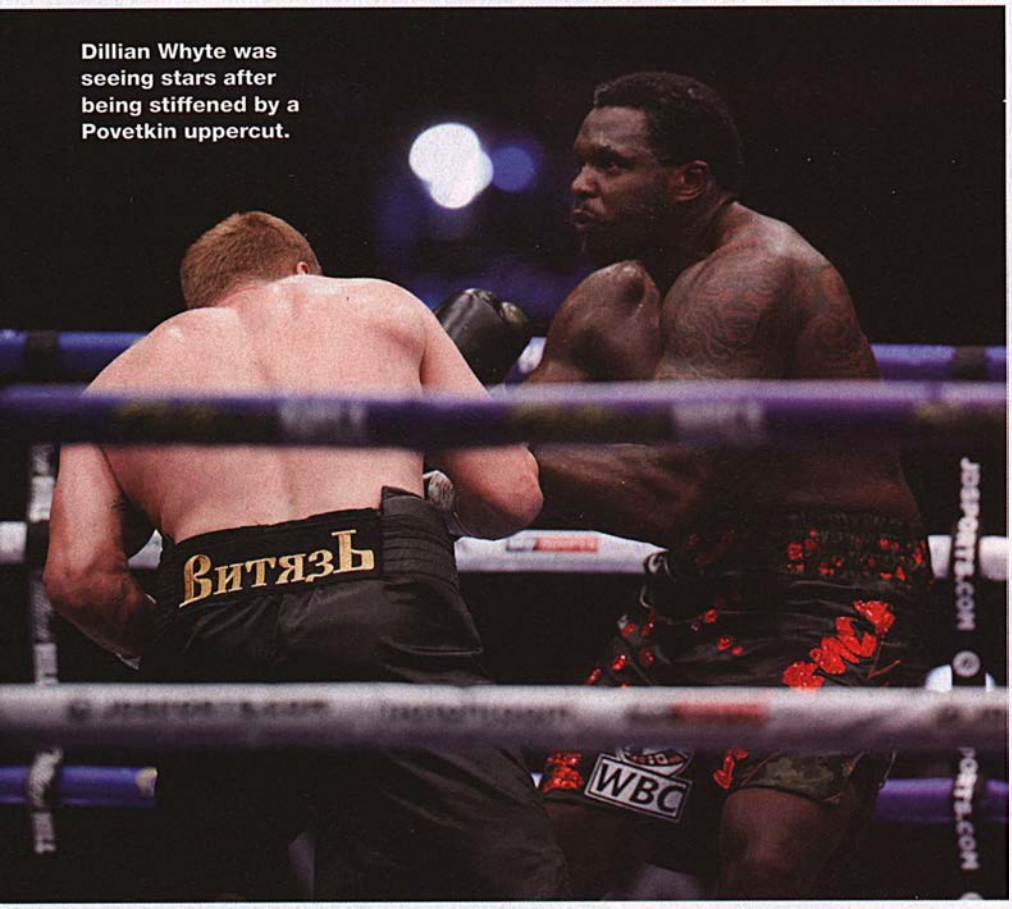
An all-British heavyweight superfight between Fury and Joshua is the biggest event in world boxing, but just how close is it to reality?

COVER PHOTOS BY AL BELLO (FURY); NICK POTTS (JOSHUA)

In the second defense of his WBO 130-pound title, Jamel Herring (left) claimed an eighth-round disqualification win over Jonathan Oquendo in Las Vegas.

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK VIA GETTY IMAGES



Dillian Whyte was seeing stars after being stiffened by a Povetkin uppercut.

POVETKIN KOS WHYTE

I have mixed feelings regarding Dillian Whyte's shocking KO of Alexander Povetkin. On one side, I was happy to see my prediction come true and have my bet pay off. However, it was hard to see a fighter I like on the receiving end of such a brutal shot, but that's boxing!

For me, there are three things I learned from the fight ...

1. The last thing a boxer loses is their power; Povetkin looked slow and predictable prior to that brutal uppercut.

2. Dillian Whyte is susceptible to uppercuts, as Povetkin said and showed. Maybe we should have seen this; he was KO'd by an uppercut from Anthony Joshua, dropped with one by Oscar Rivas and tagged several times by uppercuts in both of his fights with Dereck Chisora.

3. For me, AJ and Tyson Fury are a class above the other heavyweights. While Joshua lost to Ruiz, he has a solid resume and scored an impressive KO over Povetkin, while Fury has scored massively impressive wins over Deontay Wilder and Wladimir Klitschko and is a very talented boxer.

Tommy Devoy
Valencia, Spain

WE'LL GET THROUGH IT TOGETHER

While most of us can't wait to get back to normalcy from the pandemic, and while things have been slow in the fight world, The Ring is keeping up its great tradition by providing great boxing memories through your special issues.

As a boxing fan since the '70s, I will remain a subscriber to the ring for the rest of my days, due to your great journalism. Keep up the great work.

Rick Meunier
Burrillville, R.I.

'MONEY' SHORTCHANGED

I understand that this issue of The Ring (November 2020) was dedicated to the great Manny Pacquiao, but, my goodness, could Don Stradley have been any more dismissive of perhaps the greatest boxer of the last 20 years, Floyd Mayweather Jr.?

"... Mayweather decided his best option was to keep his distance and do just enough to win rounds. ..." In other words, Money Mayweather "decided his best option" was to thoroughly outbox Pacquiao and easily win the fight(?).

"If they (the fans) hadn't learned their lesson before – that Mayweather would rather dive into a lake of broken glass than engage in an actual fistfight – they certainly knew it now." I'm sorry, the 50 matches Mayweather managed to win without one single blemish must have actually been tennis. My mistake.

"Chances are, it will be Pacquiao we talk about in the future, not Mayweather." Wow. I'd think that a guy who won 50 fights in a row and 15 world titles might be inclined to receive just a twinge more respect, Mr. Stradley.

You're better than that. So was Mayweather. Give him his props.

Darren Paulson
darren@rhccv.net

MR STRADLEY'S RESPONSE: "I'll stand by my comments. Actually, I thought I was more than generous to Mayweather."

OLDEST TOURNAMENT

I manage a website that collects boxers' records in Japan. In this country, the "Rookies of the Year Tournament" was first held in 1946 and, with the exception of an interruption in 1952, has been held continuously since then. Many world champions (from Fighting Harada to Masayuki Ito) also participated in the tournament before winning the world title.

Tournaments are held in each weight up to the middleweight limit (the number of classes varies slightly from year to year), and over 200 boxers participate each year (the lowest was 69 in 1951).

Isn't it rare to find a pro boxing tournament as large and as continuous as this one in the world? We think so, and we are planning to apply for the Guinness World Records. If you have any information on the "oldest" pro boxing tournament, we would appreciate it.

Yoshihiko Yamamoto

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S RESPONSE: I'm not aware of any ongoing annual professional boxing tournament that has been in existence as long as the "Rookies of the Year" tournament in Japan. Amateur boxing tournaments date back to the late 1800s with the Amateur Boxing Association in the U.K. and the Amateur Athletic Union in the U.S. The oldest ongoing annual amateur tournament in the U.S. is the Golden Gloves, which began in Chicago in the late 1920s and gradually expanded to nationwide competition. Tournaments in professional boxing are few and far between and usually stand-alone tourneys, not annual events. The WBA launched an eight-man heavyweight tournament to find a new "champion" after they stripped their title from Muhammad Ali back in 1967. It was won by Ali's hometown friend and sparring partner Jimmy Ellis. Twenty years later, HBO sponsored a heavyweight tournament to crown an undisputed champion, which Mike Tyson won. In 2001, HBO held a similar tournament in the middleweight division, which resulted in Bernard Hopkins unifying three major world titles. From 2009-2011, Showtime produced a round-robin super middleweight tournament that resulted in Andre Ward unifying two major 168-pound belts and earning the Ring Magazine title. During this time, Showtime also hosted a four-man bantamweight tournament, which was won by Abner Mares. In recent years, the World Boxing Super Series organized by Comosa AG has hosted five tournaments, which have crowned Ring Magazine champions at cruiserweight (twice), super middleweight, junior welterweight and bantamweight.

October 16 marks one year since the death of junior middleweight prospect Patrick Day, who suffered severe brain injuries in a knockout loss to Charles Conwell four days earlier.

BOXING DAY

By Jeremy Friedman

"Boxing Day"
in the UK
is an extended X-mas celebration
every year on 12/26 in that nation

Boxing Day
in the US
was lost one year ago
The present is a time for commemoration

This type of story, at least temporarily,
pushes us away from the fight game
Just the same, it's a boxing tale
where we never forget the name

Patrick Day, nicknamed "All Day"
Good family, college degree
Didn't need to be in Chicago that fall night
for the October '19 bout that cost him his life

Gifted Haitian Long Island fighter
Lost some matches and, with them, his rank
Then made a valiant comeback
Resilient as a rock into the very last round

DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES

Battle-tested 27-year-old veteran in the ring
So young outside of it
A shame not to know him better than we did
It's our loss, having to deal with his

The author's poetry profile is online at PoetLawyerate.blogspot.com. His poem "Shadow Boxing" appeared in the July 2020 issue of The Ring.

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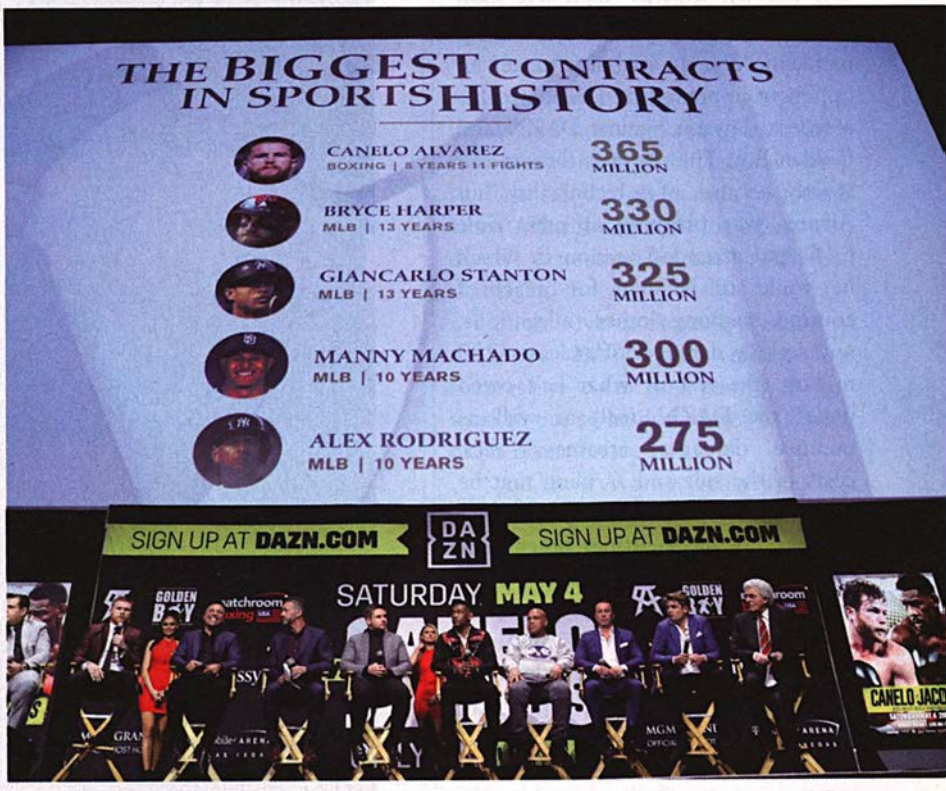
SUCH A MESS



Happier times when Canelo Alvarez, Golden Boy Promotions and DAZN first joined forces.

The relationship between superstar Canelo Alvarez and promoter Golden Boy has been deteriorating for quite some time, and now it seems to be going in the same direction with DAZN, the streaming service that signed him in late 2018 to a five-year, 11-fight, $365 million contract.

That was the largest contract given to an athlete until it was surpassed by the one baseball great Mike Trout signed with the Los Angeles Angels.

DAZN was seeking to make a splash as an upstart sports streaming service, and with so many leagues and college conferences tied up in long-term broadcast deals, it went all in on boxing around the time HBO was exiting the sport, meaning there was plenty of talent on the market.

By signing Alvarez, The Ring's No. 1 fighter pound-for-pound and the sport's biggest attraction, DAZN would take Alvarez off of pay-per-view and make his twice-yearly events the cornerstone of a schedule for which fans could subscribe for $100 per year, making it quite cost effective when measured against the $80 or so price tag of a single pay-per-view card.

Besides Alvarez's events, Golden Boy also made a deal with DAZN under which it would receive additional license fees for another 10 shows annually, giving it a platform on which to develop its young fighters and to keep its top stars active.

But three fights into the Alvarez deal the relationships have clearly fractured. DAZN doesn't feel like it's getting the level of fights it wants from Golden Boy and Alvarez, namely

a third showdown with Gennadiy Golovkin.

It has led Alvarez, who has been idle since November 2019 due to the pandemic and an inability to get an opponent approved by DAZN, to file a federal lawsuit against DAZN and Golden Boy. The suit was thrown out strictly because of a technicality, but Alvarez was planning at press time to file an amended version in which he would still be suing for breach of contract, among other allegations, and seeking damages of at least $280 million (the rest of what he's owed under the DAZN deal) as well as punitive damages, attorneys' fees, costs of the suit and a ruling that he can participate in fights arranged and promoted by entities other than Golden Boy and broadcast on an outlet other than DAZN.

Without getting into the minutiae of the suit, Alvarez contends his deal doesn't promise he will fight any particular opponent (though he has said he is open to a third fight with GGG and it had been agreed to for this past September following spring bouts that were canceled due to the pandemic).

But sources with knowledge of the deal claim Golden Boy gave DAZN approval rights in the deal it has with the broadcaster, which Alvarez claims he had no knowledge of. If they're all to be believed, the contracts contain conflicting language. That's a huge problem and why this is such a mess.

Alvarez is supposed to fight twice per year and DAZN contends at least one bout is supposed to be against a "premium" opponent. Alvarez claims DAZN has no contractual approval rights, and even if it did, it's obvious the sides don't agree on what constitutes a "premium" opponent.

Golden Boy (and presumably Canelo) believes – and I agree – that it means a top boxer: somebody with a good reputation, a strong record and probably a world title. It has offered DAZN undefeated super middleweights Callum Smith and Billy Joe Saunders. While I don't think Saunders, the WBO beltholder, necessarily meets any definition of "premium," Smith, the Ring Magazine champion, surely should count, as should have Alvarez's previous two opponents on DAZN, Daniel Jacobs (in a middleweight unification fight) and light heavyweight titleholder Sergey Kovalev. Both were among the best known in their division, each held a title and had faced elite opposition.

DAZN, however, apparently didn't see it that way, even though the fact that it paid eight figures to seal deals for Jacobs and Kovalev shows that it did in deed, if not word. According to my sources, DAZN will accept Smith or Saunders, but only for a fraction of the $40 million license fee it would owe Golden Boy ($35 million of which goes to Alvarez).

DAZN has declined to define what a "premium" opponent is but privately says it's somebody it believes will help sell a large amount of subscriptions. That's why, I'm told, it would consider opponents such as Golden Boy CEO Oscar De La Hoya, who's talking about a comeback, and MMA stars Jorge Masvidal and Khabib Nurmagomedov as "premium" foes, although it hasn't actually asked for them, contrary to some inaccurate reporting. De La Hoya is 47 and hasn't boxed since 2008, and the other guys aren't boxers, but there's no denying all three would garner huge publicity and surely sell subs.

VALERY SHARIFULIN

In the second fight of his DAZN deal, Alvarez KO'd Sergey Kovalev in 11 rounds.

In my view, however, it is wholly unfair and unrealistic to give Alvarez only one bona fide choice (Golovkin) to fight as a "premium" opponent when Alvarez contends his agreement doesn't even stipulate that DAZN has that right.

I think Alvarez is suing to light a fire under DAZN and Golden Boy to pressure them into getting things worked out so he doesn't waste a year of his prime on ice.

If you know Alvarez even a little, he's a proud man. He doesn't want to be disrespected and have his contractual rights ignored. But it's not like he's looking to get over on DAZN and fight nobodies. Throughout his career he has faced the best. His track record is clear.

That said, I'm told Alvarez was willing to take a haircut on money (at least before the suit was filed). But there's a difference between giving a discount and being told to take a fraction of what you're owed.

Remember, he was willing to fight without spectators in this coronavirus age, meaning even less money, because his fights generate millions in ticket sales, much of which goes to him.

DAZN seems to simply have a case of buyer's remorse, but nobody stuck a gun to anyone's head and made it offer Canelo $365 million. It's no different than a baseball owner signing a free agent for big bucks and regretting it later. They still have to pay.

Alvarez is willing to fight Smith, Saunders and other top fighters from middleweight to light heavyweight, as well as GGG for a third time, although that's a heavy lift without gate money when the first fight did $27 million in ticket sales and the second one did more than $24 million. Who's making that money up? There's a reason why this is a mess.

Unfortunately, if it's not resolved quickly, everyone loses: Alvarez, Golden Boy, DAZN and, as usual, fight fans.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

ALEXANDER POVETKIN

This was truly grace under pressure. Russia's Alexander Povetkin had been floored twice by pre-fight favorite Dillian Whyte in Round 4. He was away from home, he was hurt, he was behind on points, he was expected to lose. Everything was against him … but patience is a virtue. Povetkin, who recently turned 41, was one of the most decorated amateurs that his country has ever produced. He has been a professional fighter for 15 years, mixed with the best, and he has the reputation of a seasoned and dangerous power-puncher with excellent fundamentals. And he can set traps. Early in Round 5, Povetkin poked at Whyte's guard with a left jab and the Englishman responded with a half-hearted right. As that punch was on its way, Povetkin slipped to the left, bent his front knee slightly and quickly injected full leverage into a brilliant left uppercut. The shot landed on the chin with laser-like precision, switching off Whyte's consciousness instantly, the ripple of impact traveling through his legs and straightening out his colossal frame, which crashed to the canvas. The count was immediately waved, and under British rules that means the official result was a fifth-round TKO, which is akin to describing a tsunami as a spot of dampness. Whyte was out – out cold – out as much as you can be out. To hell with the rules; change this to a KO immediately. The referee could have counted to 100 and Whyte would still have been in no position to continue. Just like that, Povetkin had rekindled his career and put himself back in the heavyweight picture. As The Ring went to press, Whyte activated a rematch clause and the pair will clash again on November 21. If Povetkin can repeat this performance, he will be almost guaranteed a world title shot. The cerebral veteran has already taken Fighter of the Month honors, and he is a strong contender for winning Knockout of the Year. This finish was near-flawless.

NEW FACES

SADRIDDIN AKHMEDOV

By **Anson Wainwright**

Age: 22
Born: Nur-Sultan (Astana), Kazakhstan
Hometown: Montreal, Canada
Weight class: Junior middleweight
Height: 5-foot-8 (176 cm)
Amateur record: 241-10
Turned pro: 2018
Pro record: 11-0 (10 knockouts)
Trainer: Marc Ramsay
Manager: Camille Estephan
Promoter: Eye of the Tiger Management
Instagram: @sadriddin_soq

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Akhmedov is most pleased with winning the WBC Youth title when he stopped Abraham Juarez (13-1 at the time) with a big, booming overhand right in the fourth round in January 2019.

"It's a step in the right direction," Akhmedov told The Ring through Virginie Assaly of Eye of the Tiger Management. "I want the senior title and all the other ones. One step at a time. I have a long way to go, but I will get there."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: The 22-year-old feels an injury hampered his performance against 14-year veteran Jhony Navarrete in October 2019. However, he was still able to force the Mexican journeyman to retire after seven rounds.

"Every performance is experience," he said. "But I hurt my hand in one fight against Jhony Navarrete and had to deal with it. I wasn't able to give the performance I wanted, but it was a learning experience, a building block to learn how to deal with adversity."

NEXT FIGHT: Eye of the Tiger was trying to formalize Akhmedov's next fight when COVID-19 struck. That hasn't stopped Camille Estephan from being bullish in his search for a fight, saying he has made overtures to Canadian notables like Brandon Cook, Francis Lafrenière, Cody Crowley and Patrice Volny – all of them more experienced than Akhmedov (Crowley and Volny are undefeated).

"All these fighters refused to fight Sadriddin," said Estephan. "I think he's the real deal, and just like everyone else, they know it too. It would have to be for a big payday, and even then [they don't want to face him]. We want to put him in a big fight; we're ready to take on any and all comers.

"I believe Sadriddin has megastar potential, and that we will see very soon."

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Akhmedov won two national youth titles in Kazakhstan before the highlight of his amateur career: winning the World Youth Championships in 2016.

"I had a very good amateur career, although I think my style is much more suited for professional boxing," he said. Akhmedov made the transition and based himself in Montreal.

"I'd heard that Eye of the Tiger was developing great boxers. I had heard Batyr Jukembayev (a junior welterweight prospect from Kazakhstan) was having success and being developed well."

Akhmedov has gained valuable gym experience training and sparring with the likes of Christian Mbilli, David Lemieux, Clovis Drolet and Mikael Zewski. Renowned trainer Marc Ramsay has been suitably impressed and has worked with Akhmedov for the past seven fights.

"I'm satisfied with his development," said Ramsay, who also trains Oscar Rivas, Eleider Alvarez and Lemieux, among others. "He is only 22 years old, but he's a good worker. I expect him to be at his peak in about two to three years.

"Sadriddin is a very complete fighter: fast, powerful, good offensively and good defensively. He also has a very competitive attitude."

Akhmedov is undoubtedly very talented. He possesses a fluid style with no wasted movement, is very composed and punches well with both hands. He has a very high ceiling as a fighter.

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: Ramsay feels his pupil has one key area to improve upon to reach his full potential.

"He simply needs to be more focused on his job," said the trainer. "Much like a lot of young fighters, he has the tendency to have his mind all over the place."

How will Akhmedov react to facing someone who is equally talented and can match him for wits? Alternatively, what happens when he is cut or even dropped in a fight? Can he dig in and come back through a tough spell? Such is his ability that we likely won't find out until he faces some of the top fighters in the division, which may be a year to 18 months from now.

STORYLINES: Akhmedov was born and raised in Nur-Sultan, formerly known as Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan.

"My upbringing was very good," said Akhmedov. "I come from a good family. Our biggest value is to always work hard and be disciplined." His father pointed him in the direction of boxing when he was around 5 years old.

Akhmedov has adapted well to life in his adopted homeland, where he enjoys riding horses and playing music away from boxing.

"I love Montreal. The people are very nice," he said. "I hope to be here for a very long time with my family."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

I MISS THE BOXING SCENE

Boxing shut down in March of this year due to COVID-19. In recent months, there has been a resumption of activity. But most of it has taken place in "bubbles" and under circumstances far different from the way things were before.

I've been one of the lucky ones. I live in New York, which was the early epicenter of the coronavirus in the United States. But so far – knock on wood – I've stayed healthy. I wear a mask when I go out. I practice social distancing. I live in a nice apartment and don't have to worry about where the money will come from to pay my bills.

That said, like many people, I miss things I used to do. Activities that were part of my daily routine are now off-limits. Social interaction that was second nature to me has been curtailed. One of the things I miss most about my life the way it was is the boxing scene.

I have a life apart from boxing. I've written about Charles Dickens and Beethoven, not just Canelo Alvarez and Muhammad Ali. I've authored books on subjects ranging from race relations to United States

The big-event razzmatazz is sorely missed around the world.

Don King and Bob Arum, here with ESPN's Crystina Poncher, keeping things lively.

foreign policy, not just the sweet science. Many of my friends aren't involved with boxing. They don't even watch fights on television. But over the years, the sport has been central to my work as a writer and intertwined with my social life.

I understand what Larry Merchant was saying when he told me recently, "I started as a newspaper guy. Then I was with HBO. I was around the fight game for a long time, but I didn't realize how much I'd miss the social aspect of it until it was gone. You meet new people. The relationships can be casual or they can evolve into meaningful friendships. I've made some good friends through boxing."

The boxing scene is a circus. Going to the circus can be fun. Over the years, being in the media has afforded me access to a sometimes magical world and placed me midway between fans on the outside looking in and active participants in the drama.

I've often said that some of the best people I've met in my life are in boxing and many of the worst people I've met in my life are in boxing. But it's never boring.

Boxing is unique. It has its own culture. There's nothing quite like the boxing scene. So many of its denizens are like characters in a novel.

"I love being around boxing people," Harold Lederman once said. "There's something special about them. Even the bad ones are fun to be around."

There's a sense of belonging and being part of a community for those of us who are involved with boxing. Rituals become an enjoyable part of life's routine. Whenever Michael Buffer and I are in the same city for the same fight card, we have lunch on fight day. When Bruce Trampler is in New York for a Top Rank event, we go to the Tick Tock Diner two blocks from Madison Square Garden before or after the weigh-in. Gerry Cooney and I sit together during the fights at Barclays Center. In theory, I'm "working" on these occasions. But as the centuries-old proverb counsels, "Find a job you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life."

The boxing scene is about so much more than the fights.

Formal press conferences can be boring. Too often, the promoter speaks for 45 minutes and the main event fighters talk for two minutes each. That's entertaining if the promoter is Don King. Unfortunately, DK hasn't hosted many press conferences lately.

But the kick-off press conference is when I start thinking about how I'll frame an article that I might not write for weeks. I'm gathering pieces for the puzzle that I'll put together later on. Being at the press conference adds texture to my writing. It enables me to look a fighter in the eye. Also, some of the best material I get at press conferences comes from time spent in conversation with people before the formal press conference begins.

Weigh-ins can be tedious. I remember a conversation I had with David Tua years ago as he sat waiting for an hour to weigh in. "This is the hardest part," Tua groused. "Things that should take 15 minutes drag on and on and on." But for a writer, the waiting offers ample opportunity to talk, listen and learn.

Then there are the fights.

Mingling at some fight cards is

BILL TOMPKINS

Miguel Cotto showdowns frequently coincided with Puerto Rican Day Parade celebrations in New York. The electrifying atmosphere of those nights is impossible in the current climate.

more entertaining than the fights themselves because – let's be honest – too many of the fights that fans see these days are mediocre. But regardless of what's going on inside the ring, club fights have an ambience of their own. The feeling, the mood, the excitement when the action heats up; that's special. I miss moving around in the early hours of the evening, sitting next to Russell Peltz, Don Elbaum, Ron Katz or some other "boxing guy" and talking boxing.

Big fight weeks are a world of their own. It's electrifying when a big event catches fire.

I don't travel often for fights. When I do, it's usually to Las Vegas. I don't miss standing on line to go through airport security and the long flight to Sin City and back. I do miss the theatrics of the final days before a big fight. When Manny Pacquiao was at his peak, Pacquiao events had the feel of a world convocation.

I miss hanging out in the media center at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and shmoozing with Al Bernstein, Norm Frauenheim and Bill Caplan. There's always someone to talk with. Sometimes that someone is a legend like Ray Leonard or Roberto Duran. I miss going through the buffet line at the final pre-fight press conference and eating what I want.

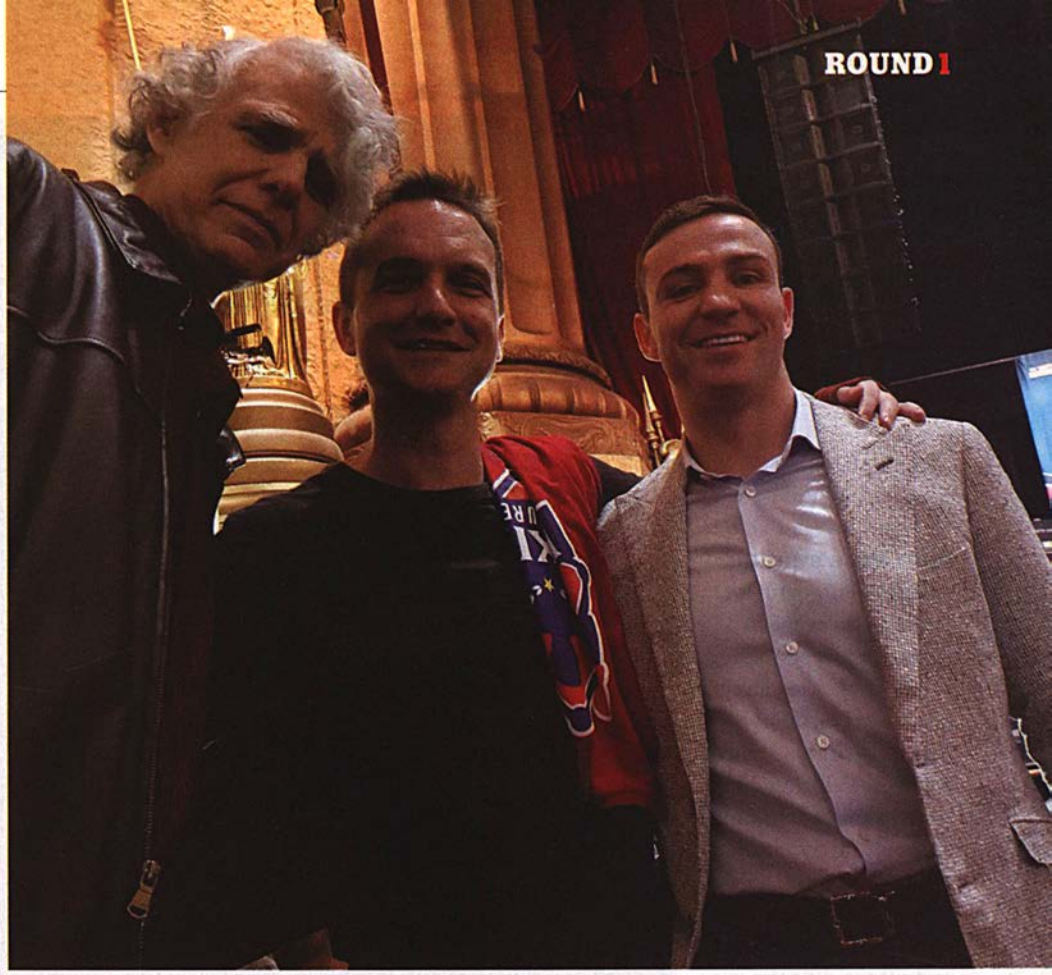
I don't miss standing on line to pick up my fight-night credential. But I do miss the rush I feel each time I'm handed my credential. I arrive at the arena early for a big fight, watch the crowd file in, and let my mind wander.

I miss the crowd filing into Madison Square Garden to root for Felix Trinidad and Miguel Cotto. I miss sitting at ringside and watching the brutal artistry of Lennox Lewis and Bernard Hopkins.

I've been privileged over the years in that dozens of fighters have allowed me to spend the hours before and after a fight in the dressing room with them. Nothing in sports is as serious as two men getting in a boxing ring. Pre-fight promotion is the propaganda before the war. Now the soldiers have to do battle. I miss sitting close enough to a man to touch him, knowing that, win or lose, his life will be very different when he returns to the dressing room in a little more than an hour.

I miss the opportunity the boxing scene has given me to get to know people like Don Turner, Freddie Roach and Russ Anber. I miss spending time with people who are no longer with us like Eddie Futch, Emanuel Steward, Angelo Dundee, Naazim Richardson, Jimmy Glenn, Don Chargin, George Kimball and Artie Curry.

It's human nature to get a bit jaded. Sometimes we take things for granted more than we should. Then we miss them when they're gone.



(Left to right) Thomas Hauser, Sky Sports commentator Andy Clarke and former middleweight contender Mathew Macklin.

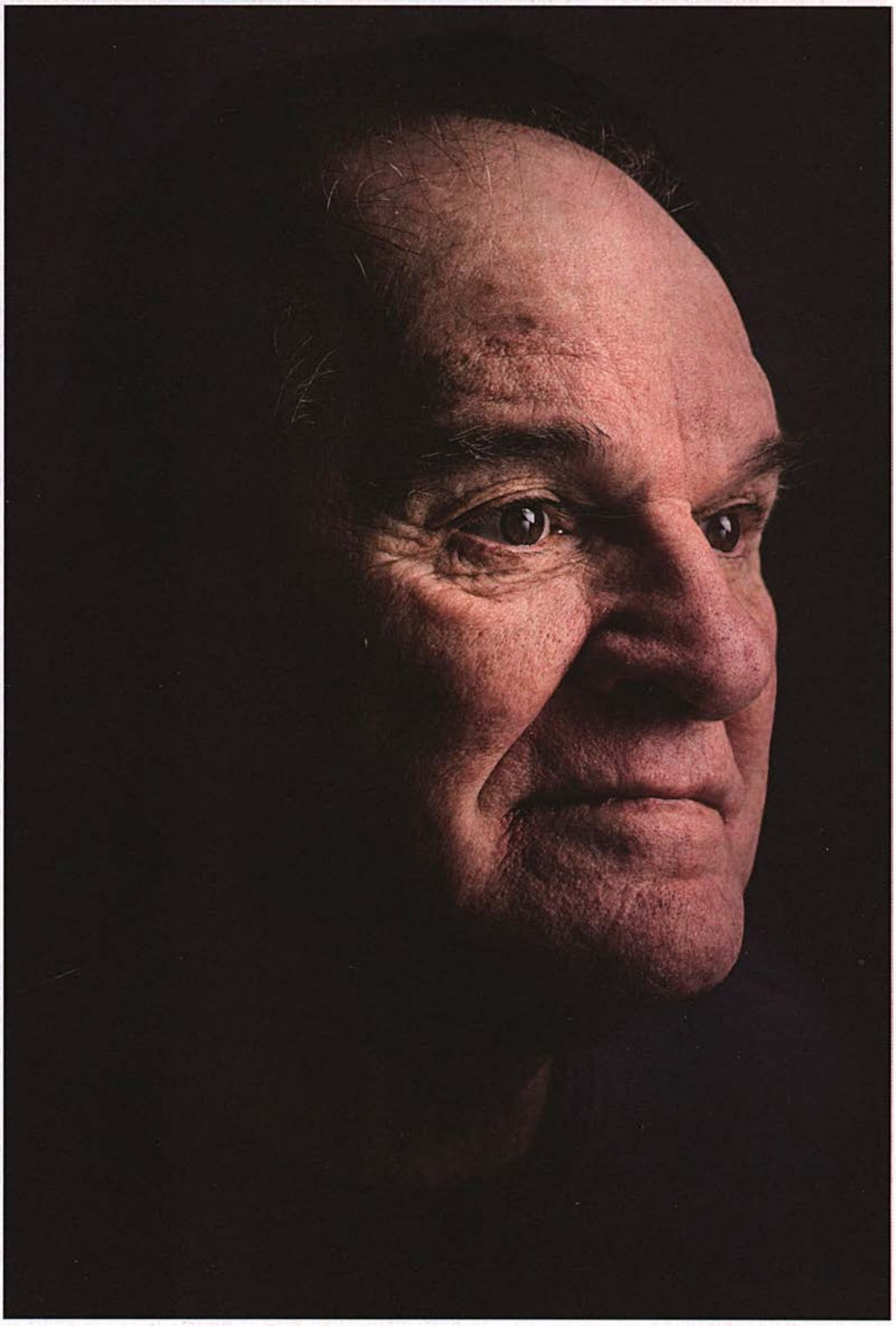
The next big fight in Las Vegas when things are up and running again will be like a reunion. But boxing will be slow to come back. The return won't happen all at once. For the foreseeable future, big press conferences, a crowded media center and on-site crowds will be a thing of the past.

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored him with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. Hauser will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the Class of 2020.

PETE ROSE AND BOXING

THE FACE OF BOXING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**
TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

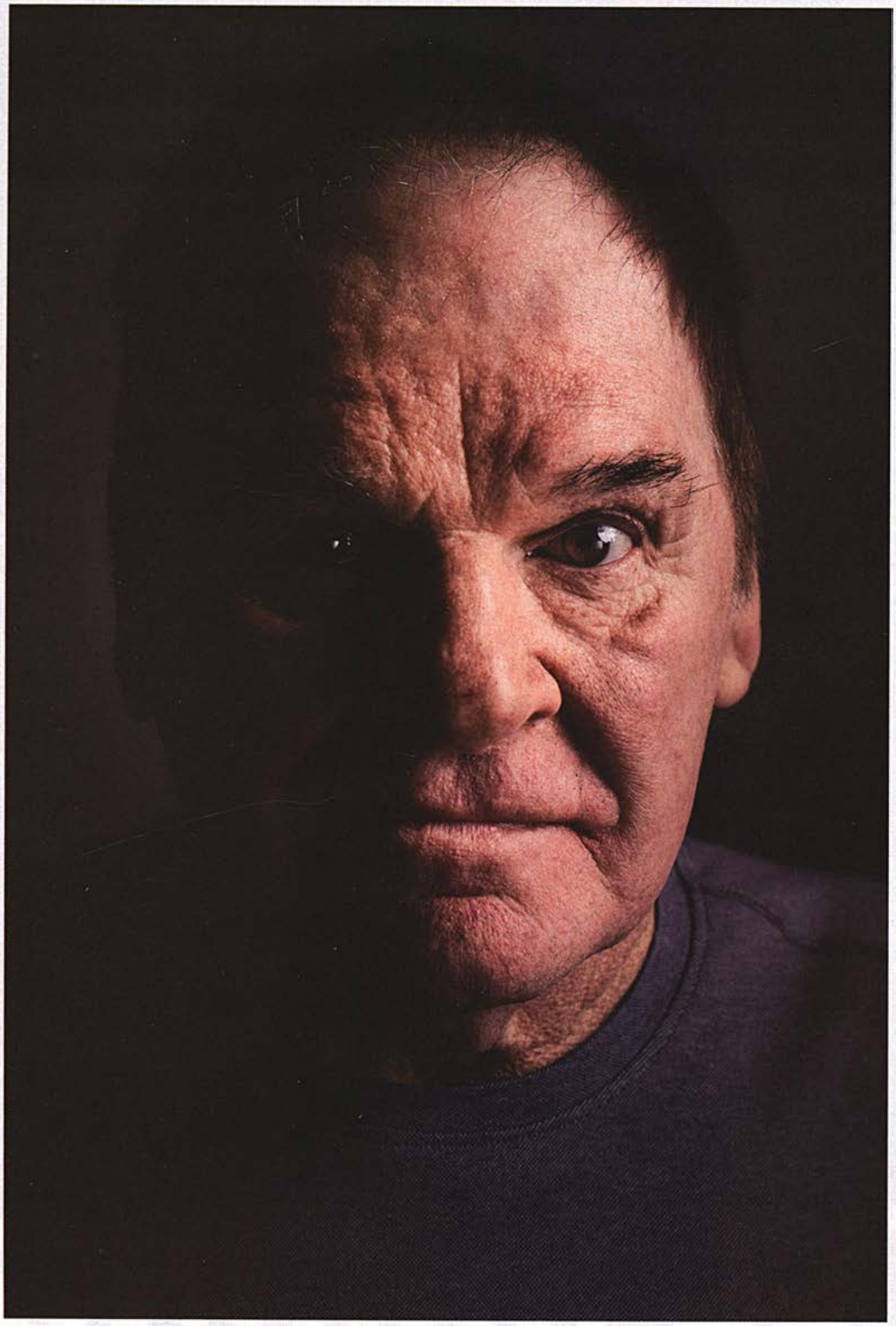


Pete Rose's father bought him a pair of boxing gloves when Pete was 6 years old.

"He began teaching me the art of self-defense," Major League Baseball's all-time hits leader recounted in an autobiography entitled *My Prison Without Bars:* "He taught me how to jab, punch, bob and weave. But the very first time I let down my gloves, Dad cuffed the back of my neck with his open hand. It didn't hurt but it sure caught my attention."

Rose had two amateur fights and lost both of them.

"Just before my 16th birthday," Rose reminisced in his book, "Dad arranged for my first amateur match at the Finley Street neighborhood club. I fought Virgil Coles, an experienced boxer from the inner city who pretty much used me as his punching bag. But I took everything Coles dished out and on occasion landed a few wild punches myself. I was getting my brains beat out. Dad knew it but didn't want me to see that he was



concerned. I stood on my feet for the full [three] rounds and never once hit the canvas."

And his second fight?

"The second one was against a guy who had five kids at ringside watching," Rose told me years ago. "I didn't get knocked out. But I did say to myself, 'I better go play ball.'"

Wojtek Urbanek was in the media center at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas in the days leading up to Canelo Alvarez vs. Sergey Kovalev. Meanwhile, on Thursday afternoon of fight week, Rose was signing autographs at an adjacent sports memorabilia store. Veteran publicist Bill Caplan, who has been friends with Rose for decades, asked Pete if he'd come to the media center to sit for Urbanek.

"I was standing by my equipment when I saw him walking toward me," Wojtek remembers. "I was born in Poland and grew up outside of the United States, so I didn't know much about baseball. But it was always a sport I wanted to know more about. To be honest, I felt overwhelmed to see Pete Rose walking toward me. I remember studying his face as he walked. Then he sat down in front of my camera, and I was thinking, 'A day ago, this would have been impossible for me to imagine.'

"He was very nice," Urbanek continues. "He posed the way I asked him to. When I asked for a staredown, that was intense. In that moment, I saw a dark character and the fighter inside him. Now I look back and say to myself, 'This man has more base hits than any other person in history. It's incredible that he sat for me in front of my camera.'"

Wojtek Urbanek is based in New York and can be reached at studio@wojtekurbanek.com. Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.

Pictured (left to right) Shane Mosley Jr., Fernando "El Feroz" Vargas, Diego Magdaleno

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RATINGS

The Ring Ratings through fights of September 19, 2020

The Ring Ratings Summary

HEAVYWEIGHT: Descriptions of Alexander Povetkin's near-decapitation of Dillian Whyte are splattered unambiguously on other pages in this issue, but the effect of the Russian's devastating uppercut wasn't as decisive in the behind-the-curtain world of the Ring Ratings Panël. Before the fight, Whyte was sitting at No. 2 in the rankings and Povetkin at No. 6. Obviously Povetkin had to rise, but the question was whether he should inherit Whyte's former slot and thus outrank Deontay Wilder, who was at No. 3. It seemed like the fair thing to do, but it didn't sit well with several panelists who pointed out that Povetkin was losing the fight and not looking great before he landed the perfect punch. There was also some outright buyer's remorse for having put Whyte at No. 2 in the first place, which happened when Wilder was knocked out by Tyson Fury (No. 1) in February. In the end it was decided that Wilder would be bumped up to No. 2, Povetkin would take No. 3 and Whyte No. 4.

CRUISERWEIGHT: Former kickboxing champion Aleksei Papin bounced back from last year's narrow loss to Ilunga Makabu by stopping fellow Russian Ruslan Fayfer (unrated) with an equilibrium-stripping right hand in the sixth round. Papin replaced Michael Cieslak at No. 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: Joe Smith Jr. (No. 8 last month) has been trying to prove he's for real ever since he snagged 15 minutes of fame by knocking Bernard Hopkins out of the ring in 2016, and he helped his case with a solid ninth-round stoppage of former titleholder Eleider Alvarez (No. 4 at the time) in late August. Suggestions for his promotion ranged from No. 6 to No. 3, and he eventually settled at No. 4 while Alvarez slipped to No. 7. Anthony Yarde stayed put at No. 10 after a confident sixth-round stoppage of Dec Spelman (unrated) in London.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: As with Yarde, Fedor Chudinov (No. 8) looked solid in stopping his opponent (Umar Sadiq) in Round 12, but the win wasn't meaningful enough to upgrade him.

MIDDLEWEIGHT: After getting chopped down by a revenge-driven Ryota Murata in July 2019, Rob Brant finally returned and stopped Ukraine's Vitalii Kopylenko (unrated) in five rounds, rising from No. 9 to No. 8 as a result. Maciej Sulecki (No. 9) also notched a comeback win, shutting out unrated Sasha Yengoyan over 10 rounds to soothe the memory of his loss to Demetrius Andrade (No. 2) more than a year ago, but it wasn't enough to rise in the ratings.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: Continuing the theme of guys who haven't fought for a year knocking off the rust, Erislandy Lara outpointed Greg Vendetti (unrated) and remained at No. 5. 2016 Prospect of the Year Erickson Lubin advanced from No. 9 to No. 8 after unanimously outpointing Terrell Gausha – another setback for the 2012 Olympian, who has now gone 1-2-1 in his last four.

WELTERWEIGHT: There was a half-hearted suggestion on the panel to move No. 5-rated Shawn Porter up a notch after his shutout decision over Sebastian Formella (unrated), but the idea couldn't find any traction and Porter stayed put for more challenging days. Yordenis Ugas (No. 7) also held his position after a split decision (which should have been unanimous in the Cuban's favor) over Abel Ramos (unrated), while Jaron Ennis (unrated) reminded us that he's impatiently waiting on the doorstep of a very tough division with a sixth-round stoppage of Juan Carlos Abreu (also unrated).

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: Jose Ramirez (No. 1) squeaked past Viktor Postol (No. 4) with a majority decision, but there's nowhere for Ramirez to go and Postol is like a modern Robert De Niro in that he's just really good at playing himself, so the ratings stayed the same. Arnold Barboza outpointed Tony Luis (unrated) and remained at No. 8.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: Jamel Herring (No. 3) was outboxing Jonathan Oquendo (unrated) well enough during their Bubble fight on September 9, but the scores were rendered moot after Oquendo was disqualified for headbutting after Round 8. No change in the ratings.

FEATHERWEIGHT: Previously unrated Joet Gonzalez replaced Miguel Marriaga at No. 9 after beating him with a clear-cut unanimous decision in Las Vegas – a really nice win for Gonzalez, considering he was coming off his first loss (to Shakur Stevenson). No. 6-rated Tugstsogt Nyambayar held his spot after handing Cobia Breedy (unrated) his first loss with a split decision.

STRAWWEIGHT: In a jump up to flyweight, No. 9-rated Daniel Valladares was upset via unanimous decision by Hugo Hernandez. Valladares was dropped and a South African veteran with a familiar face, Nkosinathi Joyi, came in at No. 10.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C	**TYSON FURY** RING, WBC	U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)
1	**ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO	U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)
2	**DEONTAY WILDER**	U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)
3	**ALEXANDER POVETKIN**	Russia • 36-2-1 (25 KOs)
4	**DILLIAN WHYTE**	U.K. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)
5	**LUIS ORTIZ**	Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)
6	**ANDY RUIZ JR.**	U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)
7	**JOSEPH PARKER**	New Zealand • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)
8	**MICHAEL HUNTER**	U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)
9	**OSCAR RIVAS**	Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)
10	**KUBRAT PULEV**	Bulgaria • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**MAIRIS BRIEDIS**	Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)
2	**YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF	Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)
3	**ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC	Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)
4	**KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**	Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)
5	**KEVIN LERENA**	S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)
6	**ANDREW TABITI**	U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)
7	**LAWRENCE OKOLIE**	U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)
8	**ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA	France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
9	**THABISO MCHUNU**	S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)
10	**ALEKSEI PAPIN**	Russia • 12-1-0 (11 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC	Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)
2	**DMITRY BIVOL** WBA	Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)
3	**SERGEY KOVALEV**	Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)
4	**JOE SMITH JR.**	U.S. • 26-3-0 (21 KOs)
5	**JEAN PASCAL**	Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)
6	**BADOU JACK**	Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)
7	**ELEIDER ALVAREZ**	Colombia • 25-2-0 (13 KOs)
8	**MARCUS BROWNE**	U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
9	**DOMINIC BOESEL**	Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)
10	**ANTHONY YARDE**	U.K. • 20-1-0 (19 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C	**CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA	U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)
1	**DAVID BENAVIDEZ**	U.S. • 23-0-0 (20 KOs)
2	**CALEB PLANT** IBF	U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)
3	**ANTHONY DIRRELL**	U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)
4	**CANELO ALVAREZ**	Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
5	**BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO	U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)
6	**CALEB TRUAX**	U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)
7	**JOHN RYDER**	U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)
8	**FEDOR CHUDINOV**	Russia • 23-2-0 (16 KOs)
9	**DAVID LEMIEUX**	Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)
10	**DANIEL JACOBS**	U.S. • 36-3-0 (30 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of Sept. 19, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C	**CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA	Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
1	**GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF	Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
2	**DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO	U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
3	**JERMALL CHARLO** WBC	U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
4	**SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**	Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
5	**RYOTA MURATA**	Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
6	**KAMIL SZEREMETA**	Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
7	**CHRIS EUBANK JR.**	U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
8	**ROB BRANT**	U.S. • 26-2-0 (18 KOs)
9	**MACIEJ SULECKI**	Poland • 29-2-0 (11 KOs)
10	**LIAM WILLIAMS**	U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

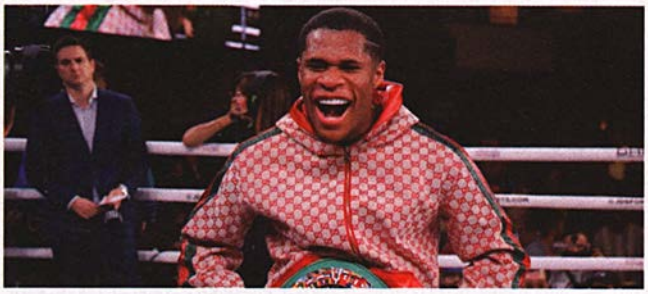
C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**JERMELL CHARLO** WBC	U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
2	**JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA	Dom. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
3	**JULIAN WILLIAMS**	U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
4	**JARRETT HURD**	U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
5	**ERISLANDY LARA**	Cuba • 27-3-3 (15 KOs)
6	**BRIAN CASTANO**	Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
7	**TONY HARRISON**	U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
8	**ERICKSON LUBIN**	U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
9	**MICHEL SORO**	France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
10	**PATRICK TEIXEIRA** WBO	Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC	U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
2	**TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO	U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
3	**MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA	Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
4	**KEITH THURMAN**	U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
5	**SHAWN PORTER**	U.S. • 31-3-1 (17 KOs)
6	**DANNY GARCIA**	U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
7	**YORDENIS UGAS**	Cuba • 26-4-0 (12 KOs)
8	**KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**	Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
9	**SERGEY LIPINETS**	Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
10	**MIKEY GARCIA**	U.S. • 40-1-0 (30 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C	**JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA	U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
1	**JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO	U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)
2	**REGIS PROGRAIS**	U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
3	**IVAN BARANCHYK**	Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
4	**VIKTOR POSTOL**	Ukraine • 31-3-0 (12 KOs)
5	**KIRYL RELIKH**	Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
6	**JOSE ZEPEDA**	U.S. • 32-2-0 (25 KOs)
7	**MARIO BARRIOS**	U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
8	**ARNOLD BARBOZA**	U.S. • 24-0-0 (10 KOs)
9	**BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV**	Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
10	**SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**	Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)



No. 2-rated lightweight Devin Haney has reportedly agreed to terms to defend his belt against former 126-pound titleholder Yuriorkis Gamboa on November 7.

No. 1-rated junior lightweight Miguel Berchelt (right) and former featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez remain hopeful that their eagerly anticipated clash will come to fruition.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C	**VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO	Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
1	**TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF	U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
2	**DEVIN HANEY** WBC	U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
3	**RICHARD COMMEY**	Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
4	**LUKE CAMPBELL**	U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
5	**RYAN GARCIA**	U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
6	**ROBERT EASTER**	U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
7	**JAVIER FORTUNA**	Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
8	**JORGE LINARES**	Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
9	**EMMANUEL TAGOE**	Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
10	**RANCES BARTHELEMY**	Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

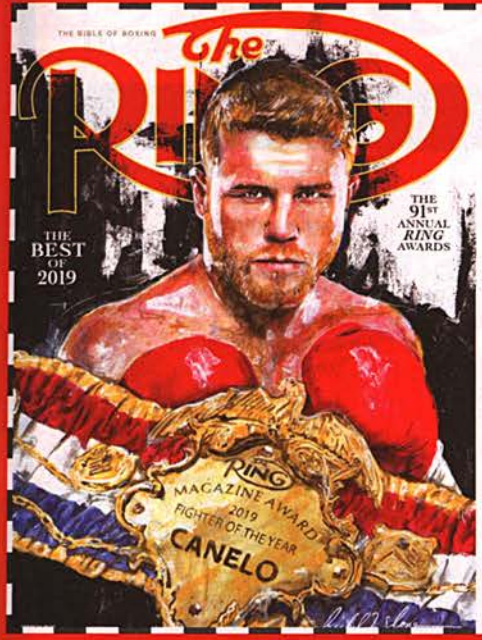
C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC	Mexico • 37-1-0 (33 KOs)
2	**JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF	U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
3	**JAMEL HERRING** WBO	U.S. • 22-2-0 (10 KOs)
4	**TEVIN FARMER**	U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
5	**RENE ALVARADO**	Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
6	**MASAYUKI ITO**	Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
7	**ANDREW CANCIO**	U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
8	**MIGUEL ROMAN**	Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
9	**SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**	Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
10	**CHRIS COLBERT**	U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF	U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
2	**GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC	U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
3	**XU CAN** WBA	China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
4	**KID GALAHAD**	U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
5	**MARK MAGSAYO**	Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
6	**TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**	Mongolia • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)
7	**JESSIE MAGDALENO**	U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
8	**RUBEN VILLA**	U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
9	**JOET GONZALEZ**	U.S. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)
10	**CHRISTOPHER DIAZ**	Puerto Rico • 26-2-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**REY VARGAS** WBC	Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
2	**MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA	Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
3	**DANIEL ROMAN**	U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
4	**RYOSUKE IWASA**	Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
5	**BRANDON FIGUEROA**	U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
6	**TOMOKI KAMEDA**	Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
7	**ANGELO LEO**	U.S. • 20-0-0 (9 KOs)
8	**HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**	Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
9	**AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**	Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)
10	**STEPHEN FULTON**	U.S. • 18-0-0 (8 KOs)



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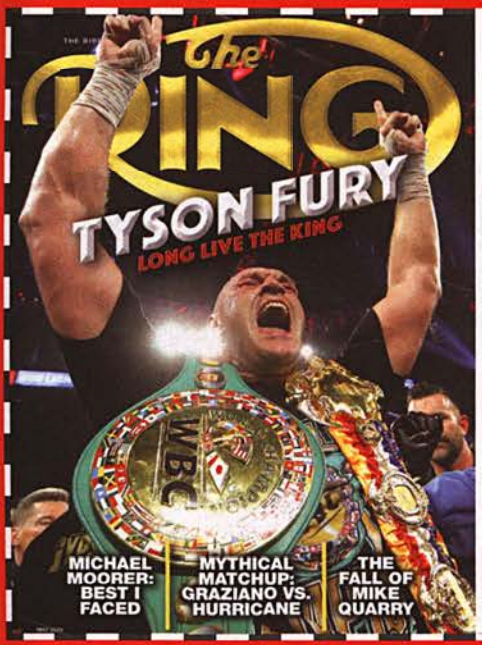

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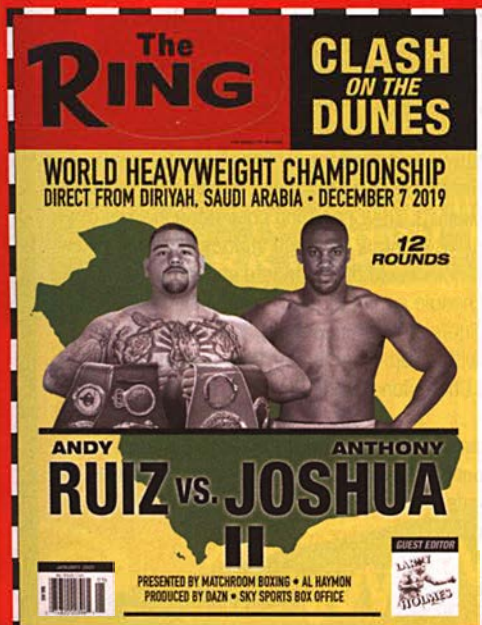

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RATINGS

Through fights of Sept. 19, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
  France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **6** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **8** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **OSCAR NEGRETE**
  U.S. • 19-2-2 (7 KOs)
- **10** **MIKE PLANIA**
  Philippines • 24-1–0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 48-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** WBA
  Nicaragua • 49-2-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
  S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI**
  Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 30-5-0 (21 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO**
  Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

No. 2-rated junior lightweight Joseph Diaz is now a world titleholder and provides a tantalizing target for the top 130-pounders.

No. 1-rated featherweight Josh Warrington has been linked to a clash against China's Can Xu, but nothing has been confirmed.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC
  Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF
  Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs
- **10** **NKOSINATHI JOYI** P. Africa •
  29-5-1 (19 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

- **1** **CANELO ALVAREZ**
  Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **2** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
  Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **NAOYA INOUE**
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **4** **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
  U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **5** **ALEKSANDR USYK**
  Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
  Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **8** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **9** **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
  Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **MANNY PACQUIAO**
  Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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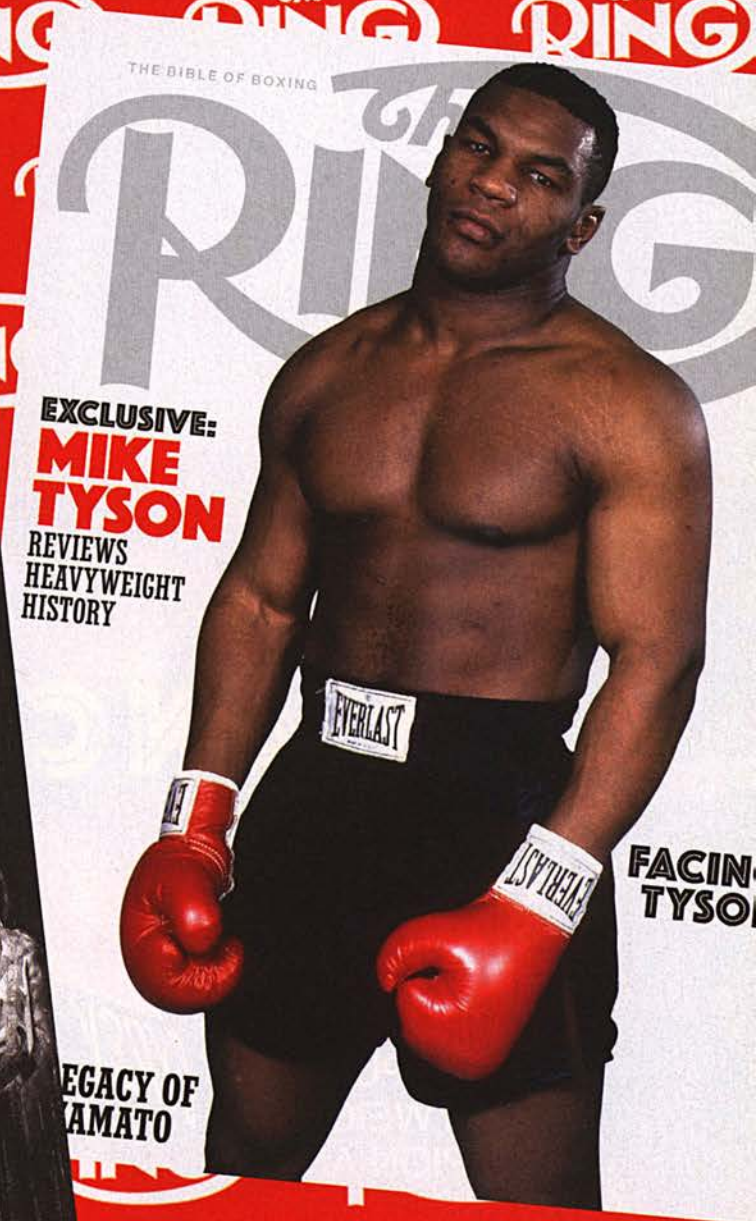

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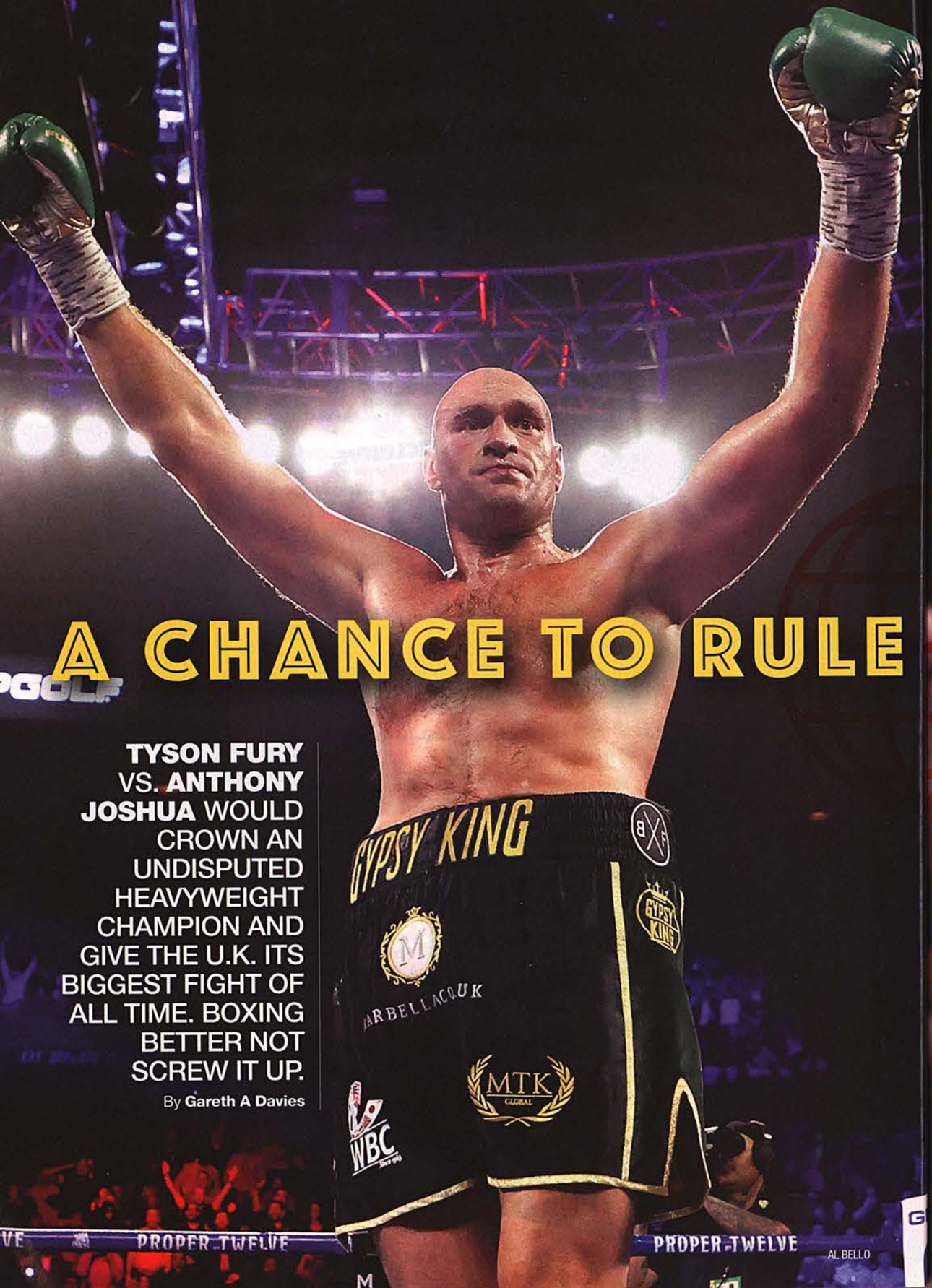
A CHANCE TO RULE THE WORLD

TYSON FURY VS. ANTHONY JOSHUA WOULD CROWN AN UNDISPUTED HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION AND GIVE THE U.K. ITS BIGGEST FIGHT OF ALL TIME. BOXING BETTER NOT SCREW IT UP.

By **Gareth A Davies**



AL BELLO

There are some heavyweight fights that simply must happen in boxing's blue riband division because of the protagonists, the matchup of styles and the raging debates that surround the fighters. Not to mention the huge sums of money that those contests generate by their nature. We all want closure on debate over who is the best. It is human to do so. And yet, remarkably, littered through the tapestried history of the heavyweight division, some of the biggest fights possible have never materialized.

"Undisputed" is a gilded trophy. That is why boxing's biggest fight in 2021, and arguably the most far-reaching in the division since Lennox Lewis fought Mike Tyson and Vitali Klitschko before easing his huge frame

A Fury-Joshua fight has been discussed for several years, but ego, money, rival TV networks and mandatory title defenses have gotten in the way.

NICK POTTS

Fury's destruction of Deontay Wilder saw him regain the Ring championship.

over and out of the ropes for the very last time, is the colossal meeting of Tyson Fury and Anthony Joshua. It simply must happen.

Between them, the "Gypsy King" and "AJ" possess all the pieces of the undisputed title (as this issue goes to press, Fury holds the Ring and WBC belts while Joshua wears the IBF, WBA and WBO versions). And not to crown a champion of supremacy within this era, at least momentarily, with two huge rivals and personalities with as diverse a reach and popularity as Fury and Joshua have, is frankly unforgivable.

Should it not happen, with both at their peak and both men considered the Nos. 1 and 2 in the rankings, it would be a travesty of the highest order. Boxing will have failed. So, too, those controlling the careers of the two fighters. Not to mention these two huge men, both of whom claim to be the best. The boxers themselves, their promoters and broadcasters, we have heard, all want the contest to go ahead, so from that standpoint, the house appears to be in order at first glance. But the question is timing and whether all the belts will be on the line when the pair do actually touch gloves for the first time before battle.

Fury's contractual obligation to grant Deontay Wilder a third fight and Joshua's IBF-mandated title defense against Kubrat Pulev could possibly derail the British superfight for heavyweight supremacy before the start of 2021. Joshua-Pulev, which had been set for June prior to the pandemic, has been targeted for December 12 in London. Fury-Wilder 3, originally scheduled for July, has been pushed back to December 19 in Las Vegas. Should Joshua turn back Pulev's challenge, he may have another sanctioning body commitment to deal with in the form of WBO mandatory Aleksandr Usyk (provided the former undisputed cruiserweight champ gets by heavyweight gatekeeper Dereck Chisora on October 31). It's a dense thicket to navigate, but the prize is worth it.

With Fury and Joshua, the diaspora of views from fans is split on who has the tools and the credentials to get the job done, so in many ways it is the perfect crossover fight for mainstream interest. The journey of both men forms a collision course replete with storylines and intrigue.

There are so many layers and subtexts, notwithstanding the fact that Fury has actually held all the belts, given that his defeat of Wladimir Klitschko in 2015 saw the Briton claim the Ring, IBF, WBA and WBO belts on a mesmerizing night in Dusseldorf before they were scattered to the winds as the champion disintegrated through his own mental welfare.

Fury's return also became an enormous global sports story in itself. Indeed, it grew into the making of a sports legend as Fury's rehabilitation was documented and celebrated for different reasons, including some outside the realm of athletics.

It still beggars belief that Fury shed 10 stone (140 pounds) and came back to face Wilder twice, with a

controversial draw favoring his visit to Los Angeles followed by an emphatic trouncing of the WBC titleholder 15 months later in Las Vegas. The seventh-round stoppage was a night to remember, given Fury's imperturbable self-belief in dismantling Wilder and becoming a two-time Ring champion, this time with the green belt as well.

The bully was bullied for once, and the man from Alabama had no answer.

It was the making of a Hollywood movie, unbelievable at times, and the inspiration for thousands of other lives. Fury, a heavyweight champion of the world, open, vulnerable, from a rough, tough family of Traveller descent, had become accessible to millions of others who are suffering in their own worlds. He was open about his mental health issues, and it simply made him even more popular. The people witnessed a 265-pound, 6-foot-9 fighter struggling just like they do at times. From such things, genuine sporting heroes are lionized, and Fury became the people's champion as well as the heavyweight champ.

In the meantime, between the two Wilder encounters, Fury's foundation found its corporate center by signing with promoter Bob Arum and Top Rank, alongside ESPN, with a whopping financial deal in the USA. He was licensed in Nevada. It brought even greater clout to the Gypsy King's standing and formed a powerful broadcast and promotional alliance across The Pond with Frank Warren and BT Sport in the U.K. It was a case of all bases covered. To boot, Fury even had a brief dalliance with the WWE, which only added to his sizable following.

For his part, with the belts scattered and Fury in the wilderness (few believed the Gypsy King would ever come back, let alone get in shape) Joshua set about recovering them, defeating Charles Martin (IBF) in the U.K., a shrewd matchup from promoter Eddie Hearn; Wladimir Klitschko (for the vacant WBA belt), in what your correspondent sees as AJ's most notable performance; and then Joseph Parker (WBO) to become a unified three-belt titleholder.

Joshua, rising from his great Olympic success in London in 2012, barely put a glove wrong in his climb up the ladder, being a corporate and national fan favorite, carefully cultivating a business empire, which has included managing other potential future world champions. A deep thinker, Joshua enjoyed his success while learning on the job. Then came the cataclysm of Andy Ruiz on that ignominious night in June 2019 at Madison Square Garden, the scene of drama when unfavored, underdog Ruiz had his own meeting with history and became the first Mexican-American heavyweight champion of the world when he stopped the giant in front of him. It was Joshua's U.S. debut.

Six months later, Joshua returned

WPA POOL

Joshua, pictured with U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his fiancée, Carrie Symonds, is accustomed to mixing in high society.

imperiously. Replenished in Saudi Arabia with a measured, if at times stilted performance in rounds 13 to 24 with Ruiz, Joshua sucked up all the criticism and repelled his trolls by showing that he can return to the drawing board with his power and athleticism and right the wrongs of an undoing. He was cautious, but Joshua was back with three of the belts in his possession. Every Joshua fight from here on in will have thrills and spills, one suspects. But that is part of the beauty of him as a boxer.

As Fury has vulnerabilities, so does Joshua. They are different weaknesses. And that alone makes this contest all the more fascinating. We know Joshua can fight. But can Joshua box? And how much better can Joshua's boxing get? In no way can you rule him out against Fury, because Joshua has too much power and desire to write off.

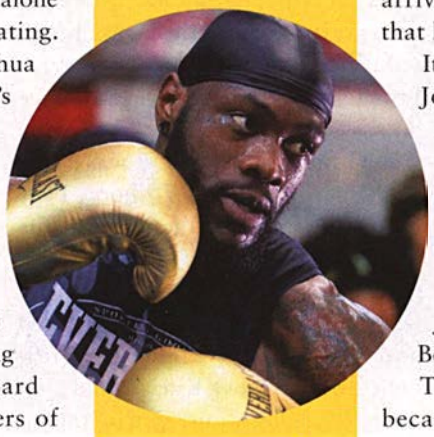
Joshua also has the other side of the business market sewn up, with the Sky Box Office deal in the U.K. and DAZN in the U.S., with Hearn at the wheel of both as promoter, ever ready, continuing to play with the heavyweight chessboard with whole or partial say in the careers of Usyk and Dillian Whyte (who could regain WBC mandatory status if he manages to beat Alexander Povetkin in their November rematch) – important fighters to move out of the way of, rather than block, the collision of the Fury-Joshua fistic axis.

But who is the incumbent No. 1? Any boxing sage will tell you that it is Fury's ring skills that edge the fight toward him on paper, and yet Joshua can lay claim to being a brutal finisher. The Ring Magazine, rightly in my view, has Fury atop the division. But we have learned to expect the unexpected in boxing, nowhere more so than in the heavyweight division. Anything could happen in this fight.

Three months into the coronavirus pandemic, in June 2020, there was suddenly lockdown love for the big fight between Fury and Joshua. There was the revelation, suddenly, that Fury and Joshua would fight for the undisputed heavyweight title in 2021, with terms for two fights "agreed" to between the two sides: a 50/50 split of the purse in the first with a 60/40 split for the winner in a rematch. It sent the boxing world and its fans into a frenzy. It was received as good news at the time because, with the sports world having ground to a halt, aficionados in lockdown had something to cheer about and savor. It was like manna from heaven.

CLEARING THE PATH

In order for the ultimate heavyweight superfight to become a reality, Fury must first get past old nemesis Deontay Wilder, against whom he has secured one victory and a draw, in what will be their third and presumably final meeting. Joshua must also dispose of former title challenger Kubrat Pulev – and he will be a prohibitive favorite to do so – in an IBF title defense currently scheduled to take place in mid-December. Will the stars align and give the fans Fury-Joshua? Time will tell.



There are big fights in boxing, the exciting ones, the ones we wake up thinking of at times, perceiving the shapes moving or the myriad outcomes that might transpire, how they will dance together. But then there are the colossal fights, the ones we know will join the narrative history of the sport, the legacy of times long ago when not just aficionados of boxing relished the night, but it seemed almost as if the world at large would stop to crane its collective neck at the giants arriving in the ring. We are on the cusp of that happening; this is that time again.

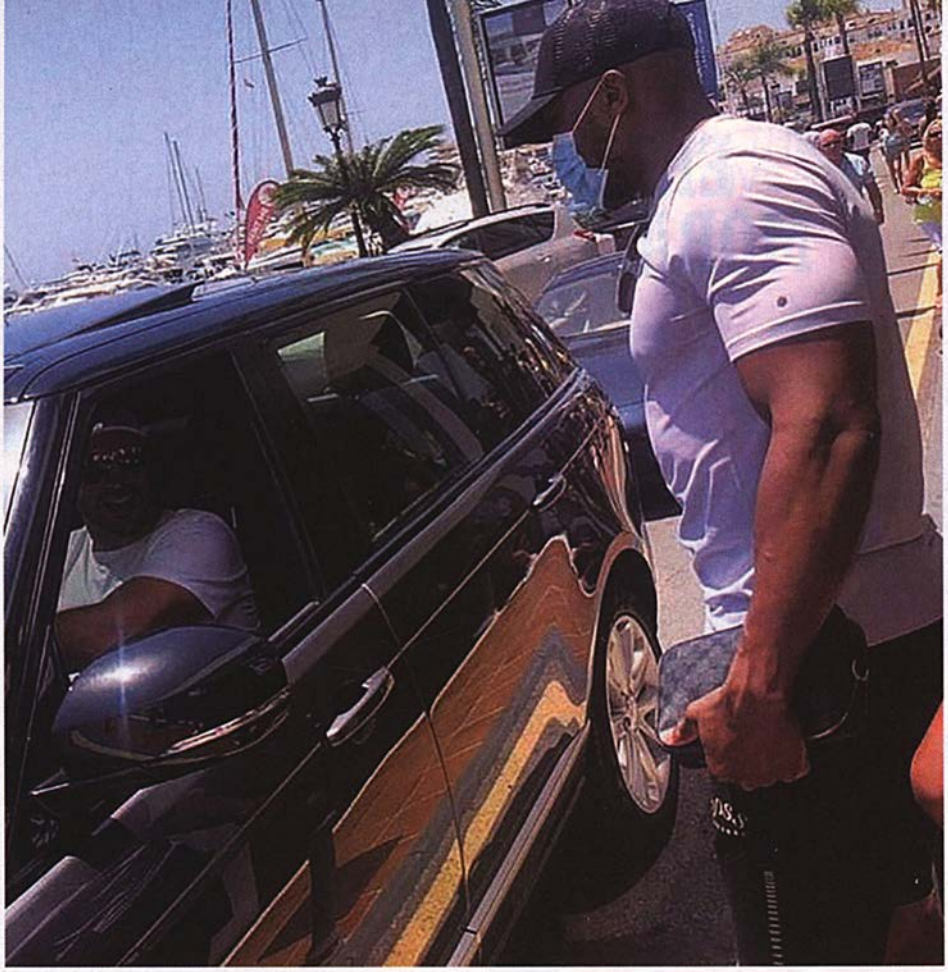
It means, if it does go ahead, that Fury-Joshua will not join the graveyard of ghost fights from the past two great heavyweight eras. The fights that never happened, for a panoply of reasons, involving inflated egos or simply bad timing: fights like George Foreman and Larry Holmes; Ken Norton against Joe Frazier; Lennox Lewis and Riddick Bowe; Bowe against Mike Tyson.

The last of those never happened because Tyson, memorably, as a guest on CNN's *Larry King Live* in April 1994, said he would return to boxing after his time incarcerated but would not fight ex-titleholder Bowe because they were both from Brownsville, Brooklyn, and were friends. In the Lewis, Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Bowe era, we had eight contests between them. However, we missed out on one, two or potentially even a trilogy of fights between Lewis and Bowe. Perhaps Tyson and Bowe we can write off.

But go back further, and five giants of the ring waged a battle royale for the ages.

It is always slightly off to compare eras of the past, but between 1971 and 1980, Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Joe Frazier, Larry Holmes and Ken Norton were involved in 12 separate contests that are still discussed with relish and delight by a worldwide audience of boxing freaks and casual fans alike. Holmes fought in two of these, Foreman in four, Norton and Frazier in five and Ali in eight. If, say, by 2023 we have not seen the likes of Fury, Joshua, Wilder, Usyk, Povetkin, Whyte and possibly Daniel Dubois all face off in the ring, then the era will have failed in large part to deliver a conveyor belt of potentially massive fights.

Boxing can ill afford the fights between Fury and Joshua not to happen. We need a



The pair had a chance meeting in Marbella, Spain, recently.

statement on the rightful king, the No. 1 atop the mountain. Nothing to do with debate or counter argument, but simply based on the results. They need two fights, one suspects, and that is why there was so much excitement when the two big men had at least agreed in principle to two fights without the complex contracts that will no doubt follow.

In my opinion, one fight in the U.K. and another in the U.S. would be perfect, but given the purses that are clearly being touted by the Middle East, it would not be surprising if one of them landed there, especially if the earning potential for both prizefighters is substantially higher. Boxing is a sport, but at this level it is so much more about business, too. And this is a very big business transaction as well as a fight for supremacy.

There is little debate about the fact that Fury against Joshua for the undisputed heavyweight crown and all the world title belts would be the biggest fight the U.K. has ever seen – if it does indeed happen in the U.K., rather than the Middle East. Guesstimates on the revenue potential are $250 million-plus, and maybe even much more, if the cards and the details stack up in the right order.

But in boxing we learn to expect the unexpected. Especially in the heavyweight division. And it may only take one punch to upset the best laid plans for this all-British global blockbuster.

Fury, 32, was on his high horse in August at a live Frank Warren show behind closed doors, goading Joshua, telling him to "grow a pair."

"If Wilder doesn't happen, let's do Joshua in December," said Fury. "Why not? It's a boxing match; let's get it on. I'm ready to go now. I could fight him tonight. It doesn't really matter; I'd still kick his ass. Joshua had a chance at glory in America to go and beat Wilder, but he didn't take it. So I had to come out of retirement, set about Wilder a couple of times, take the number one spot, take all the glory, and now they're all looking up to me.

"Joshua must be looking up thinking, 'Do you know what? That could've been me.' But it wasn't. It's their own fault. It's played a massive part in how it's all panned out now. They've got to come through me, so I'm saying, 'Grow a pair, come see the champ.'"

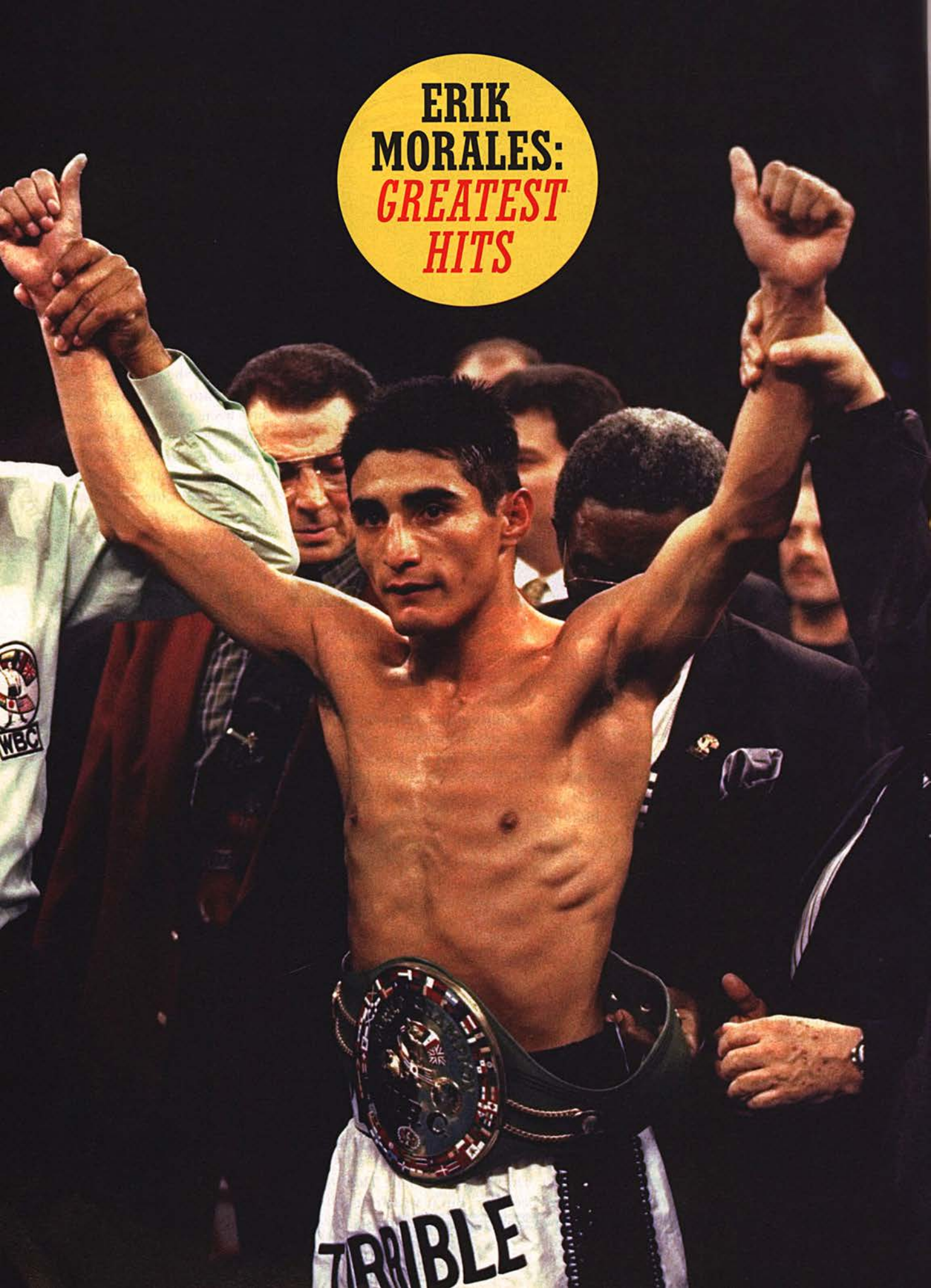
The 30-year-old Joshua bit back in September. "If he wants to cement his legacy, I'm here and ready," he said. "I've built myself into this position. Fury has been professional much longer than me. He should be looking to retire soon. I haven't got fear of Fury – whether he's got a better chin than me, a better jab than me, whether he's all of this stuff that people say. So be it. Let me go in there and prove myself, show you who I am and what I can do." Joshua even claimed that Fury (or Wilder) would not be "the best fighters that I have challenged." We shall see.

Both prizefighters have spoken. So it is time they took the leap of faith – and fists. The danger, nonetheless, apart from the blight of the coronavirus pandemic, which has wrecked audiences at fights in 2020 and thus the momentum of history-making events, is that a single punch in any other respective fight that Fury and Joshua may take in the interim could shave a sizable chunk of the magnitude of this contest as it stands, should they lose. The house of cards, stacked with millions and millions of dollars and bragging rights for eternity, would come crumbling down.

Fury has not a blemish on his career resume. Joshua avenged his solitary loss by some measure. We need Fury-Joshua sooner rather than later. It is a case of who dares, wins. And both fighters must be willing to take the dare in the deep end of the division and create an epic encounter.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The London Telegraph.

ERIK MORALES: *GREATEST HITS*



MEXICO'S FIRST FOUR-DIVISION TITLEHOLDER HAD THE TALENT AND SKILL TO OUTBOX THE BEST OF HIS ERA BUT PREFERRED TO GIVE HIS FANS THE BATTLES THEY CRAVED

By **Anson Wainwright**

Erik Morales was the embodiment of a Mexican warrior during his Hall of Fame career: aggressive and skilled with an indomitable fighting spirit. It says a lot to be considered one of the country's best boxers ever. But "El Terrible" – the first fighter from Mexico to win world titles in four weight classes – is certainly that.

Morales was born in 1976 and was brought up in a boxing family in the notorious Zona Norte district of Tijuana, near the border of California. His father, Jose "Olivaritos" Morales, had a brief pro career and operated a successful boxing gym.

"I was raised in a really tough neighborhood, where fighting on the streets was really, really common," Morales told The Ring through Victor Silva. "Problems always found me. I always fought on the street to defend myself.

"I had been working out at a gym since I was 10, 11 – I was fighting and helping pro fighters. So when I grew up to 14, 15, it was going really well. It was my job. I made the decision to turn professional when I was 16."

After roughly 100 amateur fights, Morales made his professional debut in March 1993. Two years later, after winning his first 16 fights in Mexico, the teenager fought in the U.S. for the first time and claimed the vacant NABF 122-pound title. He fought on both sides of the border over the next couple of years, working his way into the WBC mandatory position for a shot at hardened veteran Daniel Zaragoza in El Paso, Texas, in September 1997.

The bout was closely contested until Morales broke through in the 10th, dropping the defending titleholder with a right to the body and then stopping him the following round.

At his best, Morales was one of the finest pound-for-pound fighters in the world.

Morales went on to establish himself as one of the best junior featherweights of all time. He made nine defenses, which included a fourth-round stoppage of two-division titleholder Junior Jones, outboxing the iron-jawed Wayne McCullough and edging Marco Antonio Barrera, with whom he would share a bitter rivalry.

With nothing left to prove at 122 pounds (and struggling mightily to make weight), Morales moved up to featherweight. He soon became a two-weight titleholder, scoring a hotly contested unanimous decision over Guty Espadas Jr. for the WBC belt. Two fights later, he suffered his first loss by dropping a razor-thin decision to Barrera in their grudge rematch.

Morales would regain the title but soon moved up to junior lightweight, where he beat Jesus Chavez for the WBC title and then Carlos Hernandez for the IBF belt. He would lose another close encounter with Barrera before impressively beating rising star Manny Pacquiao in an action-packed battle.

However, that fight seemed to take something out of the proud Mexican, who lost his next four fights, including two knockouts to Pacquiao and a narrow decision at the hands of WBC lightweight beltholder David Diaz.

"I really wanted the fourth title against Diaz," said Morales. "I did whatever had to be done. I left boxing after the Diaz fight. I thought I did enough to win that fight. I was tired and needed to rest. I was a little disappointed with that fight."

Morales retired and for the next three years became a promoter in Mexico.

"[Fans] started asking me why I'm not fighting," he said. "They started really pushing me. I had some personal problems and I didn't know how to solve these problems. I really wanted to go back to boxing, but I did not find the strength to push me."

Eventually that changed. "[My father] said, 'If you are coming back, we have to come back the right way.' So we did," Morales explained. "We fought in Mexico three times, then I fought (Marcos) Maidana and it was a bad fight [for me].

"When I came back to Mexico City, (WBC president) Don Jose Sulaiman asked me if I wanted the chance to fight for the (WBC junior welterweight) title because Timothy Bradley had vacated but that I had to face the highest-ranked contender. And at that moment, it was Lucas Matthysse. I thought it would be a hard fight, but I said, 'Of course. I'll take it.'

"When I was training, they told me Matthysse got sick and couldn't fight and I would face Pablo Cesar Cano, a young, strong and good fighter. I thought of the time I won my first title when I was young and Zaragoza was old."

Morales knew too much for Cano and stopped him in 10 rounds to become the first Mexican to win world titles in four weight classes. He fought twice more, losing to the much younger, fresher Danny Garcia.

Morales (52-9, 36 KOs) entered the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2018. Now 43, he still lives in Tijuana, is married and has seven children. He is a federal deputy and a boxing analyst for Fox, in addition to training former WBO 154-pound titleholder Jaime Munguia.

He wants to be remembered as "a fighter who loves to please the fans, to give a spectacular show."

Morales enjoyed looking back on his career for readers of The Ring, focusing on eight career-defining performances:

ENRIQUE JUPITER

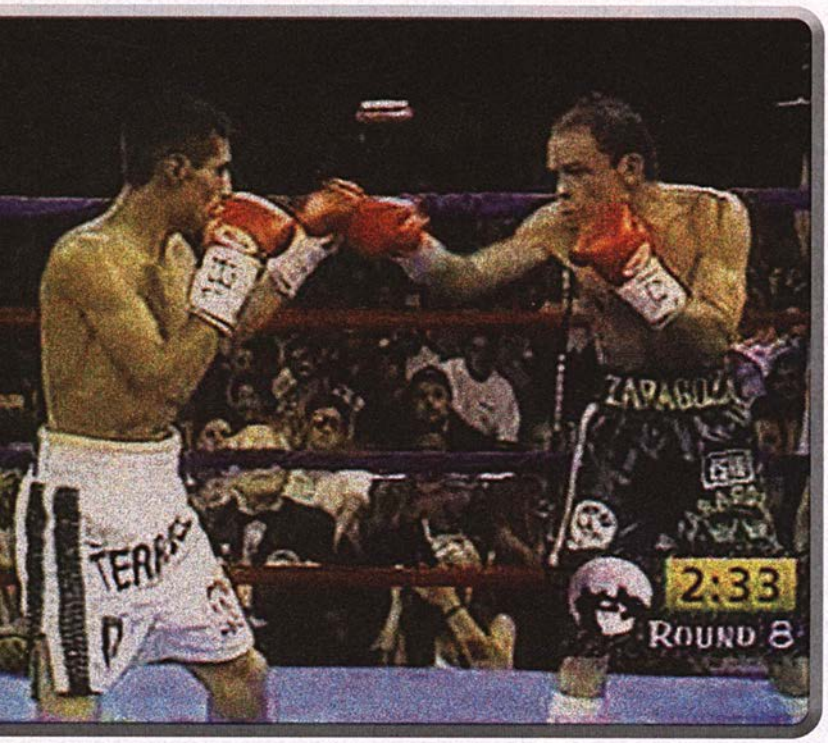
April 21, 1995, Tijuana Auditorium, Tijuana, Mexico • Non-title bout

"Jupiter was ranked No. 1 in Mexico and he was beating everyone here. … I watched some highlights. I was 14-0 and I had fought only regional fighters; I hadn't fought anyone well-known. I came to Mexico City to train for the fight. A journalist was picking on me, saying if there was a knockout, it would be by Jupiter – he was really strong and it was going to be a hard fight. I didn't pay attention to that guy, but it was a really difficult fight.

"In the first round, my father didn't let me go with everything. He was restraining me and saying I have to be careful, Jupiter can punch really hard. At the end of the round, I closed the round really hard and my father told me I shouldn't be doing that. In the second round, I was just moving around, trying to punch him a few times, and I found out how hard Jupiter can fight and punch. I decided to punch; I had to let him know [I could fight also]. I threw a punch and hurt him and dropped him twice in Round 2. When the round was finished, I went to the corner and my father smacked me down and said, 'You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't be standing in front of him.'

"My father asked me to just dance around in the fourth and fifth, and at the beginning of the sixth he told me, 'Now is the time. Do what you have to do, whatever it takes. Go after him.' We found when I threw the jab, Jupiter moved his hand to block and moved his head back, and I knew I could use that. I went to throw a jab and changed it to a hook. That would make Jupiter move the hand to the front and head to the back, and then I can punch him with the right hand. I was having fun and laughing, and then I decided to be serious and threw a punch and changed it to a hook, and I got him with the right hand from a long distance and hurt him. He went to the canvas, and the fight was over. That was when I proved I could do anything I wanted in boxing. Winning against that guy, in that way, I knew I could face anyone."

RESULT: MORALES TKO 6



DANIEL ZARAGOZA

September 6, 1997, County Coliseum, El Paso, Texas • Titles: WBC junior featherweight

"I knew I was the young guy and Zaragoza was the champion and he had faced all of this before. He won the title from (Hector) Acero Sanchez, then [defended against Joichiro] Tatsuyoshi, (Tsuyoshi) Harada, McCullough and again Tatsuyoshi – strong fighters. Daniel Zaragoza was old but in great shape and winning. They didn't want to give me the fight, but we had a strategy so it wouldn't happen the same as it did with other fighters. My strategy was to wear him down. I didn't care if I won the early rounds; the idea was to make him walk and wear him down. In the sixth round, I started to push him and hurt him. Sometimes Zaragoza caught me, but nothing serious. Then I knocked him out.

I was the youngest, but I was the smartest. I used experience to beat an experienced guy. The celebration was really quiet; I didn't drink or really party. We had cake and sweet bread, that kind of thing. The main thing was there were so many Mexican fighters trying to be champion of the world, and most of them couldn't do it. When I did it, I found out I was on the side of fighters who could be world champion."

RESULT: MORALES KO 11

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

February 19, 2000, Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas • Titles: WBC/WBO junior featherweight

"It was made to be a great rivalry. There were insults. I am from outside the capital – Barrera used it as an insult. He called me 'native,' and every time someone talked to me about Barrera, I said something bad about him. It was really nasty. The press really helped to build that up in every way. There was no difference in class; I didn't go to university (as Barrera did) because I followed my boxing career. The main problem at that time was the capital was a little cocky, and the rest of the country started hating the people from the capital. The people who live in the capital are called 'Chilangos.' At that point there was a big campaign saying, 'If you kill a Chilango, you help Mexico.' That fight helped to build this, because I am from Tijuana and Barrera is from the capital.

"I didn't do anything different. In fact, I shouldn't have taken that fight at that moment. When I fought McCullough, I was so tired – I shouldn't have been fighting in that weight division. I was so tired. I took a vacation. My wife was pregnant; I wanted to go and train in Mexico City in November, but I wanted to wait until my daughter was born. My daughter was born on January 4, I went to Mexico City on January 5 to train and I fought on February 19. I wasn't ready. I didn't train as hard as I could. It was a really hard fight.

"I didn't want to have the fight at 122 pounds; I wanted it at 126. It was really hard for me to make 122, especially because I didn't train as long as I should because of my daughter. They really wanted the fight at 122, so I signed for it. I was worn out; it was too hard [making weight]. I didn't have the energy in the fifth round. I even thought of quitting, but then I thought of my daughter, about winning and losing. I took my chances and fought really hard. I believe I won the fight. The referee shouldn't have given me a count in the 12th round; Barrera missed the two punches and that's why I lost balance, and I shouldn't have received the count. I couldn't make 122 anymore."

RESULT: MORALES SD 12

PAULIE AYALA

November 16, 2002, Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas • Titles: vacant WBC featherweight

"I was training for Ayala and I thought there was no way he could beat me, but some writers said it was an even fight. Two weeks before the fight, I got the flu really, really bad. I asked my promoter, (Fernando) Beltran, to cancel the fight. Beltran said, 'Come to Tijuana and we'll talk about it.' They didn't cancel the fight. I kept training every other day, because I wanted my body to rest and get better.

"The week of the fight, I was overweight; I got to Vegas six pounds over. I was really working hard to make weight. On Thursday and Friday, I was running one hour and then got into the sauna, then running again. On Friday, I was one pound over. I was devastated. I was crying. I was saying, 'I know it's only one pound – I just can't.' It was really, really hard. The secret is that when I went back to Tijuana to train, I stayed at a hotel, not at home. I met my family at a Wendy's restaurant. My daughter was almost 3 years old. I was talking with my wife and she asked how I felt, and I told her, 'I feel bad. I want to cancel the fight. I'm sick. I haven't trained every day. I'm still eight pounds over.' My daughter turned to me and said, 'Daddy, don't worry. Everything is going to be fine.' I thought that was a signal everything was going to be OK. I decided to train, run, do whatever it takes to do the fight. It was a great night and everything was fine."

RESULT: MORALES UD 12

TOP: JED JACOBSOHN; CHRIS FARINA

JESUS CHAVEZ

February 28, 2004, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBC junior lightweight

"The deal with this fight was that since I was a little kid, I heard Julio Cesar Chavez was the best and the strongest Mexican fighter and he had [titles in three weight classes], but I also heard a lot of stories about him. I wanted to show to the Mexicans that there was more than Julio Cesar Chavez. There were other fighters that could win titles in three different divisions.

"It was a good fight. In the first round, he caught me with a big, big punch and put me to sleep. With the second punch, he was supposed to finish the fight, but instead of that he woke me up. After that it was a rough fight, but I won clearly."

RESULT: MORALES UD 12

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA 3

November 27, 2004, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBC junior lightweight

"I started that fight really slow; I didn't react really quickly. Then I realized I had to do something else and start fighting. Even with that, I have the arguments to say I won the fight and deserved a better scorecard. With Mexican television, me and Barrera analyzed the fight. I said to Barrera, 'I won this round, many rounds,' and Barrera didn't have the argument to change what I said. I feel I won that fight. It was a really good fight, and because of that, Top Rank signed the fight with Pacquiao.

"Once the third fight [against Barrera] was finished, I closed the chapter. If you want to judge the two of us, you have to analyze the rest of our career, and I'm above him. It took some time to figure out boxing is our job: Your job is to punch and beat the guy that is in front of you, but he's not your enemy. It took us some time, but we realized that. Now we still joke about the fights. We realize it was our profession, but we're not enemies."

RESULT: BARRERA MD 12

MANNY PACQUIAO

March 19, 2005, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Non-title bout

"I had to prove I was a great fighter against Pacquiao. I left everything out there because I wanted to show the people I was a great fighter. I lost to Barrera, even though I believe I won. [Against Pacquiao] it was not that close; it was really clear I won. I was never in danger. I saw [Pacquiao's fight against Juan Manuel Marquez] and knew I could win that fight. I knew how to win that fight. I was really excited and anxious to get into the ring, because I knew everything was going to be OK. In the first round, he attacked me and tried to push me back, and I pushed him back to the other side of the ring and I stayed there. I led the fight and won the fight. It was exciting, but it wasn't a close fight."

RESULT: MORALES UD 12

PABLO CESAR CANO

September 17, 2009, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: vacant WBC junior welterweight

"It was a tough fight, but that was my dream. I really wanted to show the people in Mexico that we could break the record of the Julio Cesar Chavez myth, that there were a lot of great fighters – even better fighters than Chavez – who can get that achievement. After me came Marquez, Canelo (Alvarez) and (Jorge) Arce. That was the main idea, and I did it."

RESULT: MORALES TKO 10

Victor Silva helped coordinate and translate this feature. The Ring appreciated his assistance.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

PACQUIAO: DONALD MIRALLE; CANO: ETHAN MILLER

PROVING GROUND

IS **ERROL SPENCE JR.** READY FOR **DANNY GARCIA'S** HEAVY HANDS IN HIS FIRST BOUT SINCE HIS CAR ACCIDENT? CAN GARCIA, WHO FELL JUST SHORT VS. KEITH THURMAN AND SHAWN PORTER, DEFEAT AN ELITE WELTERWEIGHT? QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED ON NOVEMBER 21

By **Dan Rafael**

The memory of exactly when the meeting took place is admittedly a bit foggy – maybe sometime in late 2012, more likely in 2013 – but Danny Garcia remembers it and Errol Spence Jr. does not dispute that it happened.

At the time, Garcia was in the midst of his junior welterweight championship reign and Spence was a hotshot welterweight up-and-comer who had impressed at the 2012 Olympics and was viewed by many as the best pro prospect on the U.S. team. »

It's a clash that both Errol Spence Jr. and Danny Garcia have long anticipated, and neither is taking the assignment lightly.

GARCIA: STEVEN RYAN

SPENCE: JAYNE KAMIN-ONCEA

Spence kept Lamont Peterson at bay with his vaunted right jab.

They were both represented by adviser Al Haymon and in attendance at the same fight card in Los Angeles, and it was there, on fight night, when Spence approached Garcia and asked the champ to pose for a picture with him. Garcia sized Spence up but obliged the request.

"I wish I had the shot," Garcia said. "I took the picture. I was showing love for the new, young kid coming out of the Olympics. I knew after he got a few good wins we would fight because, obviously, you have to have some good wins to fight someone like me."

Spence said he doesn't recall the meeting but admitted "it probably did happen. Danny and I have always been cool. Danny is a cool dude. I always like fighters who don't put on a persona. If you be yourself and always act the same way, I respect you. Guys like Keith Thurman, I don't really like, because I feel like he puts on a persona and he's fake to me. He'll be nice one minute and then he'll be saying stuff. But Danny doesn't do that. I always have had respect for Danny."

All these years later, Spence has more than lived up to his billing by unifying a pair of welterweight titles and gaining recognition as one of the pound-for-pound best. Garcia would leave behind the junior welterweight belts in 2014, win the WBC welterweight title and remain one of the best in the 147-pound division.

Now the picture-posing pugilists will fulfill the destiny that Garcia and Spence envisioned when they posed for that photo.

"I always knew we could eventually meet up and fight each other," Spence said. "All these guys that I used to call out wanting to fight, I always said I would wait my turn. Now they're all drooling to fight me."

And Garcia is the next man up, set to challenge Spence for his IBF and WBC 147-pound belts on November 21 in the highly anticipated main event of a Fox PPV card. At press time, the site had yet to be determined. It depends on what happens with the coronavirus pandemic and whether spectators will be allowed.

If there is anyone who might be best able to handicap the showdown, it's former two-time welterweight titlist Shawn Porter, who has faced both men and is positioned for a rematch with the winner.

"When Danny was at the fight watching me fight Errol, I think I gave Danny Garcia a lot of confidence because I had a lot of success fighting Errol," said Porter, who narrowly outpointed Garcia for the WBC belt in 2018. "I think Danny may very well be thinking, 'Shoot, I had a very close fight with Shawn Porter. I can beat this kid.' I think that's what made him get in the ring and call out Errol after our fight.

"I really do think in just about every category Errol Spence is better than Danny Garcia. Errol has better reflexes; he's faster to the punch. He has a higher work rate. The list kind of goes on from there. He's stronger and more powerful than Danny. Everyone talks about Danny's punching power and his counterpunching ability, but I think you have to stand in there in order for Danny to get off some hellacious punches. But none of us elite fighters are standing there. So, I think Errol is going to be a hard fight for Danny. To me, this fight has always been Errol Spence's."

Of course, Spence-Garcia should have already taken place by now. After Spence scored an 11th-round knockdown to cement a split decision victory over Porter to unify belts last September, Garcia climbed into the ring at Staples Center in Los Angeles, stood next to Spence and made it known that he wanted him next.

"I knew I would get the winner of Porter and Spence, and that's why I went in the ring and called him out," Garcia said. "It was definitely a done deal for January. I've always thought this was a good matchup for me, and that's why I wanted to fight him. Even though he dominated Mikey Garcia, I saw things Mikey did that I can do better and I saw things that Porter did that I can do better, so those fights made me a lot more confident of beating him."

But just three weeks after beating Porter, Spence crashed his Ferrari speeding down a Dallas highway in the wee hours of that October morning. Spence, who was charged with DUI in the wake of the accident, was lucky he wasn't killed. He was hospitalized with cuts, bruises and abrasions and had several teeth knocked out but fortunately suffered no broken bones or significant injuries.

Still, nobody, even Spence, knows for sure what to expect from him when he gets back into the ring. Will he be the same dynamic and versatile fighter, or did he lose something in the crash? That is one of the major storylines of the fight.

Spence (26-0, 21 KOs), a 30-year-old southpaw from DeSoto, Texas, said he has had all the medical exams necessary and has been cleared to fight once again.

"I don't have any lingering pain or anything," Spence insisted. "A lot of people ask about that, and I can't explain. There are people who trip off the curb and hit their head and just die or have serious injuries. I can't help what happened; no broken bones, no serious injuries. I went through all the CT scans and went to the best facilities where they were testing me and trying to see if I'm all right. And I got cleared by them. I feel like I'm 100 percent."

Porter said while Spence will be OK to fight, he doubts he'll be 100 percent, because of the accident.

"Errol's family has a lot of love for boxing, but they have more love for Errol, so I don't think Errol's family would allow him to get in the ring if the doctors didn't think he was OK," Porter said. "But I'm willing to bet Errol won't be 100 percent … he'll be close to it on fight night. The more interesting part is how does camp go? Are you going to allow the sparring partners to go at him the way they normally would? Are they gonna have to hold back? But I feel this is a fight that is all in Spence's hands. If he's healthy and fights like he normally fights, I think he wins."

Spence could have taken a tune-up fight but didn't want one. He only had eyes for a top opponent and pushed to reschedule the fight with Garcia (36-2, 21 KOs), a 32-year-old boxer-puncher from Philadelphia.

"I don't want any tune-ups," Spence said. "I could have easily taken a tune-up after everything that happened to me, but I want to fight

the best. I feel like I'm a shark, and I don't see a threat being around – nothing but tuna fish and other things that can't bite back. So put me in deep water with sharks where I belong.

"Danny Garcia is that, and he's gonna raise my game and bring it to a level where I need to be. It's an interesting fight because Danny is a fighter that can punch and he's got a great chin, so it will be very interesting to see if I can stop him or knock him down."

Spence believes the accident had a silver lining. He admitted for recent fights he'd lost some focus and motivation. Making millions can do that, he said.

"With this time off, I feel like I'm better. I'm not gonna lie. I was losing focus," Spence said. "As I progressed, I was losing a lot of focus. And the accident put me back on track. Like for Lamont Peterson (in January 2018), I was really training and focused. Even when I didn't have the fight scheduled, I was in the gym, always grinding instead of taking two or three months off. After the Lamont fight, I was losing focus."

After stopping former titleholder Peterson in the seventh round of a rout, Spence blew away mandatory challenger Carlos Ocampo in the first round, shut out Mikey Garcia in his first pay-per-view headliner and then edged Porter.

"I was getting so high in weight between fights," Spence said of his post-Peterson stretch. "I was not going to the gym. I was in the gym every day when I was coming up. I'd fight, and Monday after the fight I'd be back in the gym. After the Peterson fight, I was making a lot of money, going on vacation, going to Jamaica, hanging out, so you get distracted. I'm not gonna say I'm more hungry, but I am more focused than I've been in a long time. So the accident was definitely a silver lining."

Porter's advice to Garcia is to start fast and quickly force Spence to see if he really is OK.

"If I'm Danny, I smell blood because Errol has been in an accident, and I'm going out there to make sure even if he feels he's 100 percent that he's not 100 percent," Porter said. "Danny should start fast. I think he should get right in there and mix it up with him and see where that takes him. That's the best way to get Errol right now. If I'm Danny Garcia, I'm going right at Errol Spence. And I have a feeling he will. I think it's the smart thing to do, test Errol early."

For Garcia, the fight is just the kind of big one he has wanted again. He's no stranger to major fights, having faced numerous big-name opponents at both 140 and 147 pounds, including Erik Morales (twice), Amir Khan, Zab Judah, Lucas Matthysse, Peterson, Robert Guerrero, Thurman and Porter.

Garcia's only two defeats came in highly competitive fights, first to Thurman by split decision in a 2017 welterweight unification bout and then by unanimous decision to Porter for a vacant title in 2018.

Once again, Garcia is the underdog, as he's been for a variety of his major fights. He said the assignment against Spence reminds him of when he faced Matthysse. Garcia was the defending Ring Magazine 140-pound champion going into their 2013 fight, but Matthysse was destroying everyone in his path and was the favorite. But Garcia put on a tremendous performance, knocking Matthysse down and winning a clear decision.

"I can compare this fight to the Matthysse fight. The only thing is I'm not the champion," Garcia said. "But when I fought Matthysse, I was the underdog. Everyone was doubting me and I knew I could beat him, but no one saw my vision. I compare this fight to that fight because I already know how the media is going to react. I know I'm the underdog. But I know I'm the better fighter. Spence is just another name that I'm fighting. So, mentally all I have to do is give 120 percent, and I know I can deliver.

"I feel like I'm more battle-tested. I feel like I have the better defense. I think he gets hit more than me. Porter hit him a lot more than he hit me. I'm strong. I'm smart. It's my 10th world title fight, so I feel like everything is in my favor. I've been in this situation before."

Garcia also doesn't expect to be troubled by Spence's southpaw stance. He has beaten lefties, including Judah and Guerrero as well as Ivan Redkach, the tune-up foe he handily outpointed in January.

Spence figures to have the size, speed and power advantages, but the experience tips in Garcia's favor. Garcia also has a strong chin, a devastating left hook (although that might not be of much use against a southpaw) and superb timing.

Garcia, seen here fending off Shawn Porter in 2018, has mixed it up with the best at 140 and 147 pounds.

"I think his best trait probably is he does everything right, and he has good timing, too. His timing is really good, and he has accuracy," Spence said. "He's a pressure fighter, and the main thing I would have to do is don't rush things.

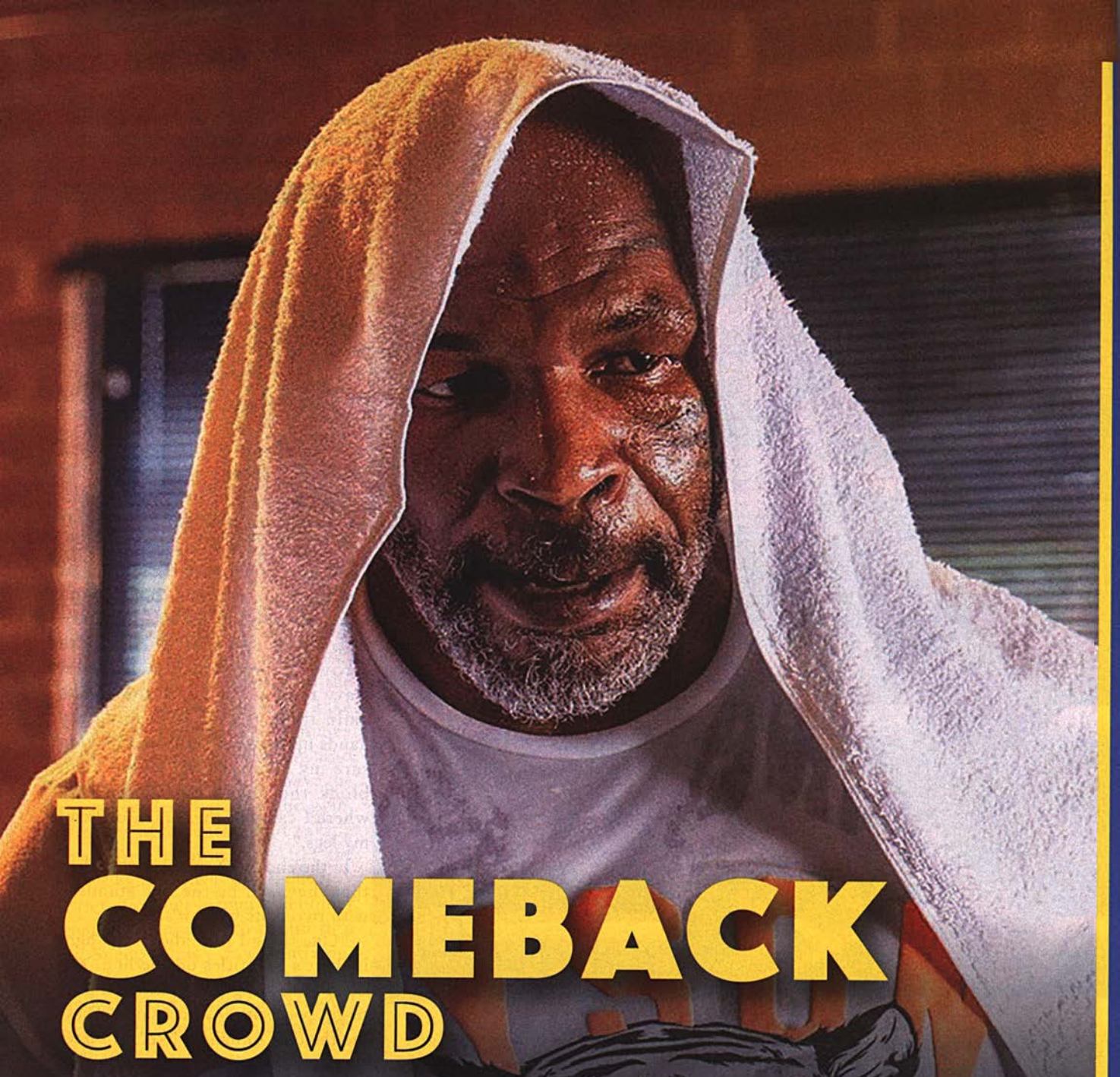
"I feel like that's how some guys got caught, because they were trying to rush in and get their shots off and got caught in-between the shots. If that was me, I wouldn't rush at all. I will fight at my pace, fight my fight and don't do anything that's gonna leave me open. A lot of guys drop their hands and miss when they're throwing their punch at him and leave their other hand down. The main thing for me is keeping my hands up between shots and making sure my hands are set where I can block the punch or I make sure where I can slip the punch or bend my legs."

In the end, both men are confident that they will be the one standing with two belts when it's over.

"One thing I love about this fight is there's two titles on the line. You don't have to fight two different guys to get two belts," Garcia said. "These are the type of fights I like. All I have to do is beat him and I have two world titles and unify in my second division and be a two-time champion at welterweight. So this is a big fight and I'm taking it very seriously. He's a champion, and that's why I want to fight him, but I take nothing away from him. I have to go in there and take those belts away from him."

Spence is more matter-of-fact in his assessment.

"I think I'm just gonna beat him up. That's one thing I do," Spence said. "I'm definitely gonna kick his ass. That's what I do – kick ass. Whether it's a decision or a knockout, it's definitely gonna be a good ass-whupping."



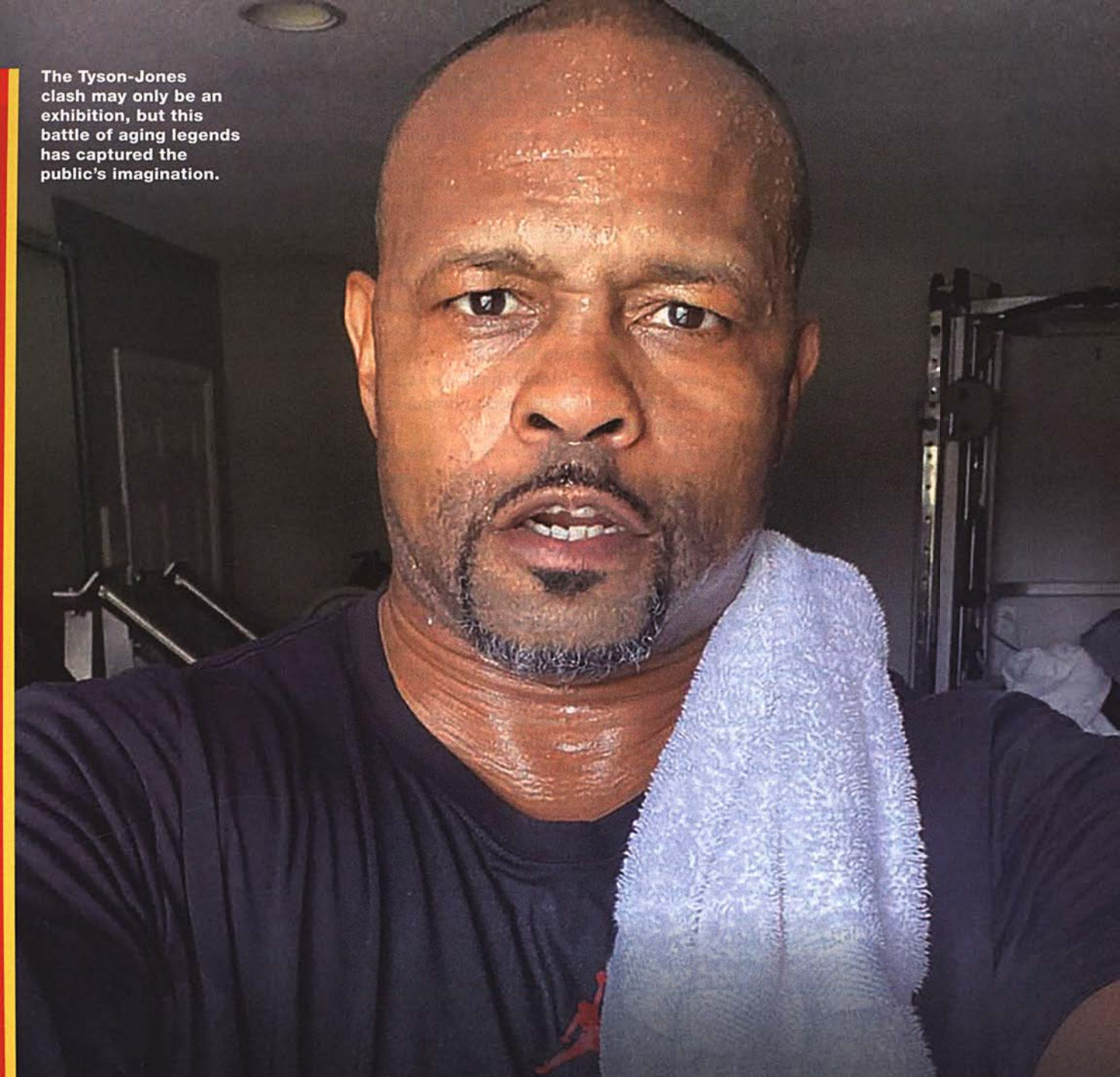
THE COMEBACK CROWD

MIKE TYSON, ROY JONES JR., OSCAR DE LA HOYA AND OTHER FORMER STARS ARE DROPPING HINTS AND MAKING PLANS TO RETURN – SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS WAVE OF UN-RETIREES?

By **Don Stradley**

At the height of the Great Depression, moviegoers loved *The Champ*, a tragic MGM feature about an alcoholic ex-boxer who comes out of retirement in order to regain the affection of his son. Played by Wallace Beery, the grizzled old pug wins his comeback fight but dies later in his dressing room. The movie was a major success and earned Beery an Academy Award. When it was remade in 1979, it still connected with people, becoming MGM's biggest hit in years. Why this depressing story has been so effective is at least partly due to our deep-rooted anxiety about fighters who make comebacks. Chiseled into our brains is a message that says boxers who come out of retirement are bound to make the audience weep.

The recent comeback stirrings from Mike Tyson, Roy



The Tyson-Jones clash may only be an exhibition, but this battle of aging legends has captured the public's imagination.

Jones Jr., Oscar De La Hoya, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Sergio Martinez have created the expected mix of surprise and curiosity, plus the usual concerns that these once-great athletes will be embarrassed or badly hurt. This sense of dread, however, feels a bit misplaced and even a bit flippant. Not all comebacks are disasters. The king of the comebackers, George Foreman, emerged from a 10-year retirement at 38 and became one of boxing's iconic figures. Granted, he was much younger than Tyson, Jones and the rest, but at the time, Foreman was considered a man tempting death. Dr. Ferdie Pacheco, working then as a television analyst and probably a fan of Beery, was so sure that Foreman would come to a terrible end that he once refused to take part in a Showtime telecast of a Foreman fight. "He is a menace to himself and to boxing in general," Pacheco said. He was an extreme example, but Pacheco's type of grandstanding still goes on. More than a few commentators have expressed morbid worry for this new wave of fighters who can't stay retired.

It's likely that the quartet of Mike, Roy, Oscar and Sergio simply don't like the way their careers ended and would like a sort of victory lap. Last year, 55-year-old Nigel Benn was scheduled to return before a shoulder injury canceled his plan. "I never really had closure," was Benn's reason for his comeback, and closure could be what Tyson and company seek. Tyson's last fight saw him quit on his stool against Kevin McBride; Martinez was stopped by Miguel Cotto; Jones won his last fight, but his aura of magnificence had been shredded by several violent knockout losses; and De La Hoya spent his final moments in a ring being torn apart by Manny Pacquiao. Chances are, they'd all like to say farewell to boxing in a better way. Martinez, who scored

in August, told a Spanish-language website that his comeback felt like a "rebirth." He plans to fight again.

In the case of Mayweather, who ended his career on a positive note, the recent noise about his possible return is more about the showman missing the roar of the crowd. Gil Clancy, the revered trainer and boxing analyst, once commented on fighters coming out of retirement by saying, "They miss the activity and the adulation, the excitement of people making a big deal out of them." And no matter how old a boxer gets, Clancy added, "he's never seen a fighter he can't lick." At the time, Clancy was discussing one of Sugar Ray Leonard's many comebacks in the 1980s, but he could've been talking about Mayweather in 2020. At least Mayweather has his money. That hasn't always been true of retired fighters coming back to the ring.

Joe Louis' return in 1950 came after a two-year retirement where he played golf, boxed some exhibitions and enjoyed the good life. He'd been involved with the International Boxing Club's search for a new champion, and many felt the intention all along was that he'd come back to challenge his replacement, who turned out to be Ezzard Charles. He also owed the U.S. government $500,000, which forced him to put the gloves on again. The Louis-Charles fight, held at Yankee Stadium, was anticlimactic. At 36, Louis couldn't keep up with his young opponent and lost by a 15-round unanimous decision. By the final round, Charles was, as the New York Daily News reported, "like a boxing instructor toying with a pupil."

Still plagued by financial woes, Louis embarked on a series of bouts around the country. Overweight and lacking the old killer instinct, he nonetheless scored seven consecutive wins over some sound opponents, including Omelio Agramonte, Cesar Brion, Lee Savold and Jimmy Bivins. Unfortunately, Louis' winning streak put him in line to face a relentless young slugger named Rocky Marciano.

If ever there was a single fight that depicted why retired fighters shouldn't return, it took place in New York on October 26, 1951, when Marciano knocked Louis out in eight rounds at Madison Square Garden. It wasn't just that Louis was beaten. It was the utter shock of seeing him battered through the ropes and onto the ring apron, an image brutal enough to inspire Red Smith's oft-quoted line: "Young men have visions; old men have dreams. But the place for old men to dream is beside the fire."

Of course, sitting by the fire wasn't going to help Louis get out of debt any more than a fireside snooze would've helped Willie Pep when he came out of retirement for several bouts in 1965. Pep was 42 and had been gone from boxing for six years but was in a financial hole thanks to a few divorces and a serious gambling habit. The comeback took on a comical tone, with Pep dodging questions about his finances as well as the quality of his opponents, one of them being so impressed at meeting the legendary Pep that he asked for an autograph at the weigh-in. In 1966, after losing a six-round decision to Calvin Woodland in Richmond, Virginia, Pep realized he was done as a boxer. It was just as well, for his reappearance had been a bust. A bout with Ray Coleman in Tucson, Arizona, had drawn less than 300 people.

Not all comebacks are about money. Public pressure to unseat Jack Johnson, the first Black man to win the heavyweight championship, resulted in the reluctant return of James J. Jeffries in 1910. Jeffries had retired undefeated five years earlier and had since grown fat on his alfalfa farm. Though he got himself into decent shape for that era's "Fight of the Century," Jeffries was no match for Johnson, succumbing in the 15th. For decades to come, Jeffries was the poster child for catastrophic boxing comebacks.

In 1926, 51-year-old Jeffries hit the ring again, this time as part of an exhibition tour with an adversary from his past, Tom Sharkey. Both needed money, and both were perfectly willing to turn their once-heated rivalry into a vaudeville act. For several months they appeared in packed theaters around the country, sparring three rounds daily in-between other entertainment acts. The press was generally kind, perhaps because the two old warhorses actually fought hard during these theatrical engagements. Years later, 61-year-old Sharkey engaged in another sparring exhibition, this time, ironically, with 56-year-old Jack Johnson at the Chicago World's Fair in 1934. By then, Jeffries was back in the black and no longer needed to bang it out with sweaty old men.

There was nothing theatrical about Eder Jofre's comeback. In fact, the Brazilian's return to boxing after a three-year retirement was not only very real but one of the greatest comebacks in history. Jofre had retired in 1966 and seemed on his way to a plush post-boxing life. He'd enjoyed a five-year reign as bantamweight champion, and was a major star in Brazil. By 1969, however, he was back in training at age 33. "I don't need the money," Jofre said. "But boxing is my first love." And in a rare case of boxing loving him back, Jofre won 14 consecutive fights before taking the WBC featherweight title from the highly regarded Jose Legra in 1973. It was a hard-fought contest, with Jofre overcoming cuts and a third-round knockdown, only to grind his way back into the fight and win by a 15-round majority decision. The 37-year-old Jofre's victory was a major upset – and proof that comebacks can be fruitful.

Jofre ran afoul of boxing politics when the WBC stripped him of the title for not fighting one of their contenders. Popular and rich enough that he didn't have to bend to anyone's wishes, Jofre fought on for another two years against middling opponents for appreciative crowds in Brazil. He retired at 40, but he often came back for exhibitions.

On July 30, 2005, 46-year-old Thomas Hearns returned to boxing after five years, saying, "It's the best thing for me. I want to live my life to

SOME OTHER NOTABLE COMEBACKS....

Benny LEONARD

Waylaid by the stock market crash of 1929, the great lightweight returned to boxing after being retired for seven years. Even as a bloated and balding welterweight, Leonard was still skillful enough to go undefeated in 23 fights. The comeback ended in 1932 when Jimmy McLarnin knocked him out in six.

Kenny LANE

Nearly 17 years separated Lane's last fight in 1965 and his 1982 return at age 50. With 96 bouts on his record, his goal was simply to reach his 100th fight. He hit the milestone at 53 and retired again. Madison Square Garden president John F.X. Condon expressed interest in booking Lane, promising to let senior citizens in for half price.

Carlos ZARATE

Returning after nearly seven years away, Zarate whipped a dozen opponents before facing WBC junior featherweight boss Jeff Fenech in 1987. At 36, Zarate lost by technical decision in four after a head clash left Fenech too bloody to continue. Being a Mexican idol had its perks, however, as Zarate was fighting for the vacant WBC title within a year. He lost again, this time by KO in 10 to Daniel Zaragoza.

Joe BUGNER

The success of Foreman's comeback inspired a lot of aged heavyweights to come out of the woodwork. Bugner, 45, came back in 1995 after eight years out and did remarkably well. He earned a few third-tier regional belts in his adopted home of Australia, winning eight of nine bouts before retiring for good in 1999 at age 49.

Jeff FENECH

Retired for 12 years, Fenech came back in 2008 at 44 to face an old opponent, Azumah Nelson, who was also making a comeback at 49. Fenech mauled his way to a 10-round majority decision. Neither man fought again after this event. For both of these tough geezers, it was one and done.

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the fullest." He'd often complained about the dreariness of retirement. He once told the Detroit Free Press that his legacy was "all good and dandy ... but for an athlete such as myself, it's the competition – the tough competition. That's what you miss most." Furthermore, he said, "Once you're away from it, yeah, you're bored. You have to really find something else to do to occupy that time." He won his comeback bout, stopping John Long in eight. He gloved up again in 2006, knocking out Shannon Landberg, a part-time window cleaner, in the 10th. "Once I get this ring rust off," Hearns said, "nothing is going to stop me." He never fought again, though. Perhaps he found a hobby.

Muhammad Ali often flirted with retirement during the middle and late 1970s, claiming every fight could be his last. Yet he never stayed out of the limelight for long. For Ali, it was all about the buzz, the thrill, and the fact that he could create an avalanche of news just by hinting at a comeback. "I've got the whole world in an uproar again," Ali said in 1980 when he was considering one more try at 38. "They're talking about me on the streets, in the nightclubs. The cab drivers in Russia are talking about me." Jimmy Ellis, Ali's friend and a former titleholder himself, explained Ali's 1980 return by telling the Associated Press, "It's hard to get boxing out of your blood when you've done it all your life." Sadly, Ali's comeback that year against Larry Holmes was abysmal. His corner stopped the fight before the 11th round. The image of the great Ali slumped on his stool was a graphic warning to all fighters. The lesson, though, didn't take hold for Ali, nor did it for many others.

We can assume that Tyson, Jones, De La Hoya, Martinez and Mayweather share something with past fighters who came out of retirement. They probably miss the excitement and the ego boost. There may even be monetary reasons we don't know about. The boxing ring was also where they were most alive and where their identities were formed. Who wouldn't revisit that place? Joe Frazier came back in 1981 after a five-and-a-half-year absence, going 10 rounds in Chicago with a muscle-bound ex-con named "Jumbo" Cummings. Frazier looked as slow as a dinosaur climbing out of a tar pit, but thanks to some generous ringside judging, he earned a draw. Columnist Dick Young offered this comment as Frazier accepted the verdict with a big smile: "Looking at that face, at that blood-splotched grin, you knew why Joe Frazier is back. He loves it."

The doomsayers will predict the worst. But with Chris Byrd, Marcos Maidana and Evander Holyfield also feeling the bite of the comeback bug while Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. and Jorge Arce spar exhibitions for charity, this is a unique time. For once, the comebackers may actually outnumber the critics.

Brother Nazim

NAAZIM RICHARDSON: 1965-2020

THE PASSING OF **NAAZIM RICHARDSON** DEPRIVED A DEEPLY SADDENED BOXING COMMUNITY OF A BELOVED MENTOR

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

Naazim Richardson didn't have to speak to get his message across. His eyes conveyed a lifetime of experience, not all of it pleasant. But his hardened gaze had an embracing core, and it will be missed.

The renowned Philadelphia trainer, who had been in declining health since suffering a near-fatal stroke in 2007, died on July 24 at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital in Darby, Pennsylvania. He was 55.

Richardson, known affectionately by the boxing community as "Brother Naazim," could speak with his eyes. He commanded that kind of respect. A darting teacher's glare, spitting swords from his pupils, could alter the tenor of a training session or quickly quiet a raucous West Philadelphia boxing gym.

His jovial, gravelly voice didn't have to bark, "Stop and do it over!" His eyes told you – even if you were a future Hall of Famer.

Bernard Hopkins knew that look. So did Richardson's other fighters, including Shane Mosley, former cruiserweight titleholder Steve Cunningham, former lightweight prospect Karl Dargan and Richardson's sons, Rock and Tiger Allen, both U.S. amateur stars. Everyone else in the boxing community knew the look, too.

"We had such a connection that Naazim could talk to me without saying a word, and it happened a lot," Hopkins told The Ring. "I knew that look when I was doing something right and when we had to go over things again. He was all about boxing and helping people – especially kids.

"You don't find people like Naazim today. Everyone in boxing, everyone in sports, has some kind of angle to get into your pocket, or they do it for selfish reasons. Naazim didn't. He was like everyone's cool uncle, the mentor who wasn't afraid to tell you things you didn't want to hear and tell you things that you needed to hear.

"And he loved everyone. If you put on a pair of gloves, whether you were a world champion or some kid learning to hit a speed bag for the first time, he loved you. It's why everyone in boxing reacted the way they did when they heard he died. I normally don't get emotional, but I did when I heard."

If you didn't know Richardson, he could come across as a burly, tough street guy. After you peeled away the layers, he was anything but. He was approachable, pleasant, caring and one of the last true boxing teachers, learning and honing his craft under another great Philadelphia boxing trainer, English "Bouie" Fisher, who guided Hopkins from a 0-1 record to the undisputed middleweight championship.

He also absorbed boxing at the feet of Philadelphia's other legendary trainers, including "Slim" Jim Robinson and Hall of Famer George Benton.

Richardson was able to condense all of the boxing lessons he learned from the masters into unforgettable catchphrases that reminded his boxers of the finer points of the sport while entertaining fans and media watching the fights.

Once you heard "Swim without getting wet," "I'm holding on with both hands," "Stick somebody with a knife, you don't have to pull your .22," "Pop the chain," "Wipe his nose," "Disappear in front of him" or "Cash the check," you knew where it was coming from.

"It was sad, really sad when I heard," said two-division titleholder Danny Garcia, a Philadelphia native. "I knew Naazim when I was a kid. Naazim believed in everyone. When I would lose, he would tell me to keep going, and he believed in all of the Philly kids.

"There will never be another Naazim Richardson. Of all of the trainers in Philly, other than my father, he believed in me. I remember one time I lost a Silver Gloves tournament when I was 12. I remember coming up to him and saying, 'Damn, I can't win a national title.' He told me to keep going: 'You'll get one. You'll get one, trust me.'"

After Garcia won the 132-pound U.S. championships in 2006, there was Richardson at ringside screaming like a crazy uncle.

"Boxing is what kept Naazim alive; he watched a lot of people become world champions and he was in bad health, but that kept him going," Garcia said. "I heard he was in poor health, but I didn't know how bad. Naazim is one of those guys who has done so much and believed in everyone.

ETHAN MILLER

"When he spoke, you paid attention. When I was a kid, I remember him telling me, 'Swim without getting wet.' I remember looking at Brother Naaz like he was crazy. I thought to myself, 'How do I swim without getting wet?' It took me years to understand what he meant: hit and not get hit."

When Cunningham first heard of Richardson's death, he took a walk by himself for close to an hour. He and his wife, Livvy, last saw Richardson on January 17 at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital, prior to Cunningham working ringside for the Julian Williams-Jeison Rosario FOX broadcast in Philadelphia.

It was a poignant time, because Richardson was often by himself.

"I have to hold myself up to the bar Naazim set, and I saw that man give props to people who didn't even like him," Cunningham recalled. "Naazim would never allow you to knock another fighter in front of him. I'll tell how much of a man he was: He made excuses for 'B-Hop' after he lost his last fight against Joe Smith, when Naazim didn't work his corner.

"Brother Naaz left a void when he died, because we need people like him, especially in the African-American community. He's someone everyone was able to turn to for help, because he didn't hold any petty grudges. We all need to aspire to be like him."

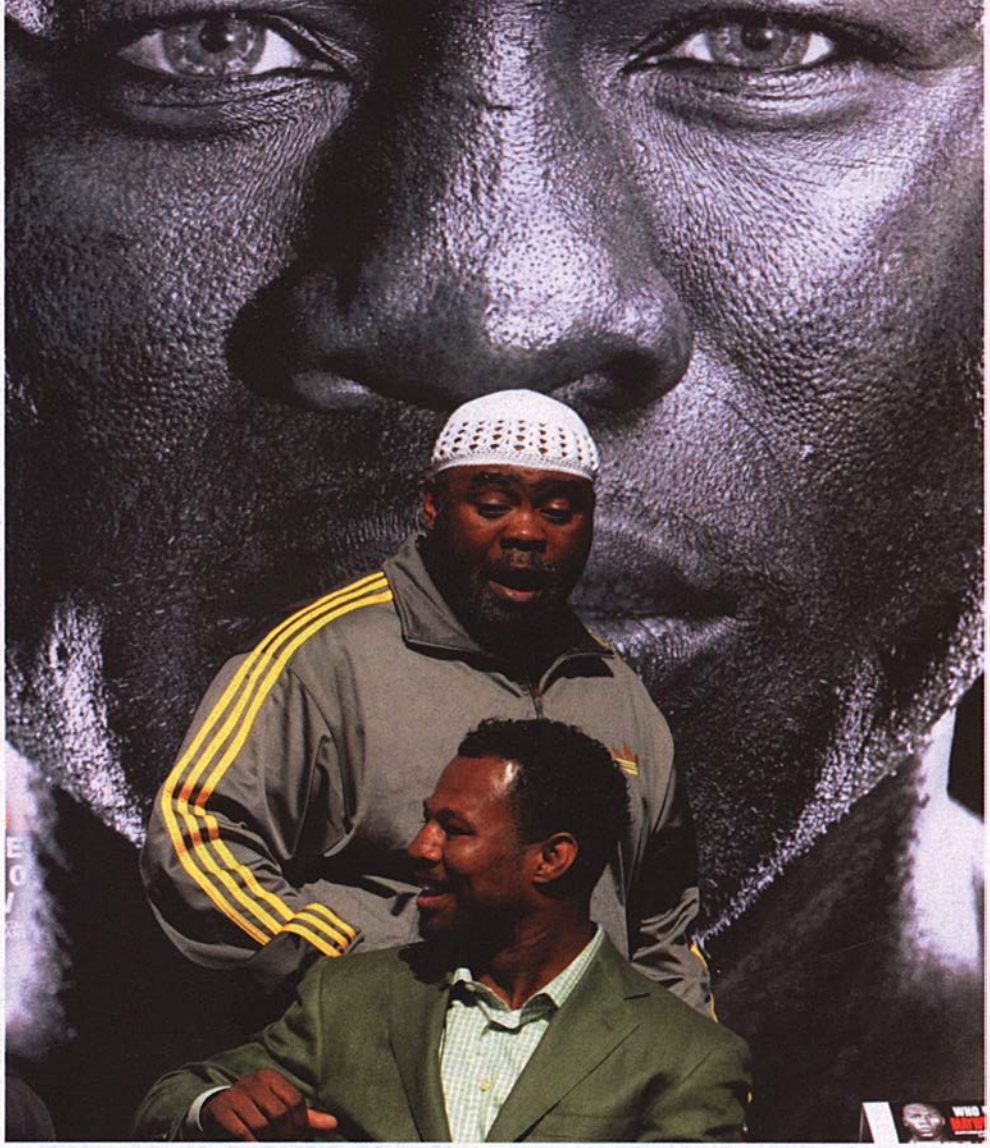
What bothers Hopkins is the lack of credit he feels Richardson receives. It was Brother Naazim who was at the root of the hand-wrapping controversy that surfaced before Hopkins' historic victory over Felix Trinidad in September 2001.

When Richardson saw the amount of bandages Felix Trinidad Sr. wrapped on his son's hands before the fight, Richardson refused to sign off on what he considered Trinidad's "padded" or reinforced hand wraps. (It should be noted that while Trinidad Sr.'s method of stacking gauze and tape is prohibited in New York, it's legal in other states.)

Fast-forward to January 24, 2009, at Staples Center in Los Angeles. Mosley, then 37, was supposed to be mere fodder for Antonio Margarito.

Margarito, who was 30, was coming off of a sensational and brutal stoppage of undefeated WBA welterweight titlist Miguel Cotto, handing the future Hall of Famer his first defeat.

Richardson, working Mosley's corner, saw something irregular in the way Margarito's trainer, Javier Capetillo, was wrapping Margarito's hands. The California State Athletic Commission forced Capetillo to rewrap Margarito's hands; they also seized Margarito's peculiar knuckle pad.



Former world champion Shane Mosley has deeply felt the loss of his friend and coach.

Mosley won the fight, while both Margarito and Capetillo were suspended for a year by the CSAC.

"Now, if Naazim's not there, what happens?" Hopkins asked rhetorically. "I possibly lose. Shane loses. It changes history. Naazim knew the rules, and he knew to watch for every trick in the book. Who knows what would have happened to me and Shane if Naazim wasn't there to catch what was happening?

"Remember, Trinidad and Margarito were killing everybody, mowing them down. Trinidad stopped (William) Joppy, (Fernando) Vargas. Margarito killed Cotto. Maybe Trinidad hurts me bad enough that

I'm not here. Maybe Margarito, and whatever plate he had, seriously damages Shane. Would we both be who we are today? Maybe not.

"Maybe Naazim saved our lives."

Of everyone who knew Brother Naazim, the one who seemed to have the most trouble with his passing was Mosley, who was supposed to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame (along with Hopkins) in June 2020 and will now have to wait a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is going to take some time," Mosley admitted. "I had a hard time posting anything (on social media) and I still can't really talk about (Richardson's death). It hurts too much.

"He was a special man. He was more like a brother than a trainer to me. He helped me at a time in my career when there were doubts, and he helped me believe in myself again. I'll never forget him."

Instilling self-belief was an ongoing theme when Richardson's name was brought up.

As an avid Hopkins fan, Julian Williams first met Brother Naazim when he was 13. In August 2013, Williams lost his mother, June, due to heart failure at 53. A month later, he was scheduled to go against Hugo Centeno Jr. in a career-defining fight.

Out of the blue, Richardson called and urged "J-Rock" to detach himself from the emotional cords his mother's passing had on him.

"I really didn't understand that," Williams recalled. "Then he said I couldn't fight off of emotion. I had to do it for me, stay sharp and stay focused. He was so right."

Echoing Cunningham, Williams added, "I think what I may remember the most about Naazim is that he would never allow anyone to knock a fighter. You better not do it in front of him. He willed himself to never say anything bad about anyone. That right there is someone I would like to evolve into and be like.

"He's someone we should all strive to be like."

Richardson was there when Jermall Charlo stopped Williams in five in December 2016. And he was there again the night Williams beat Jarrett Hurd for the unified junior middleweight titles in May 2019 in Fairfax, Virginia.

"He was the last one to leave the dressing room with us that night," Williams said. "Naazim believed in all of us. He was a special person. He could walk into a room and touch everyone in some way, if you were a stranger or not. When he spoke in the gym, everyone stopped and listened."

Hopkins and Mosley's shared regret is that the man who helped each get into the Hall of Fame won't be there to see it.

"There's really nothing anyone could say bad about him," Hopkins said. "It tells you something when your opponents like your trainer. They all respected Naazim. That was the kind of man he was.

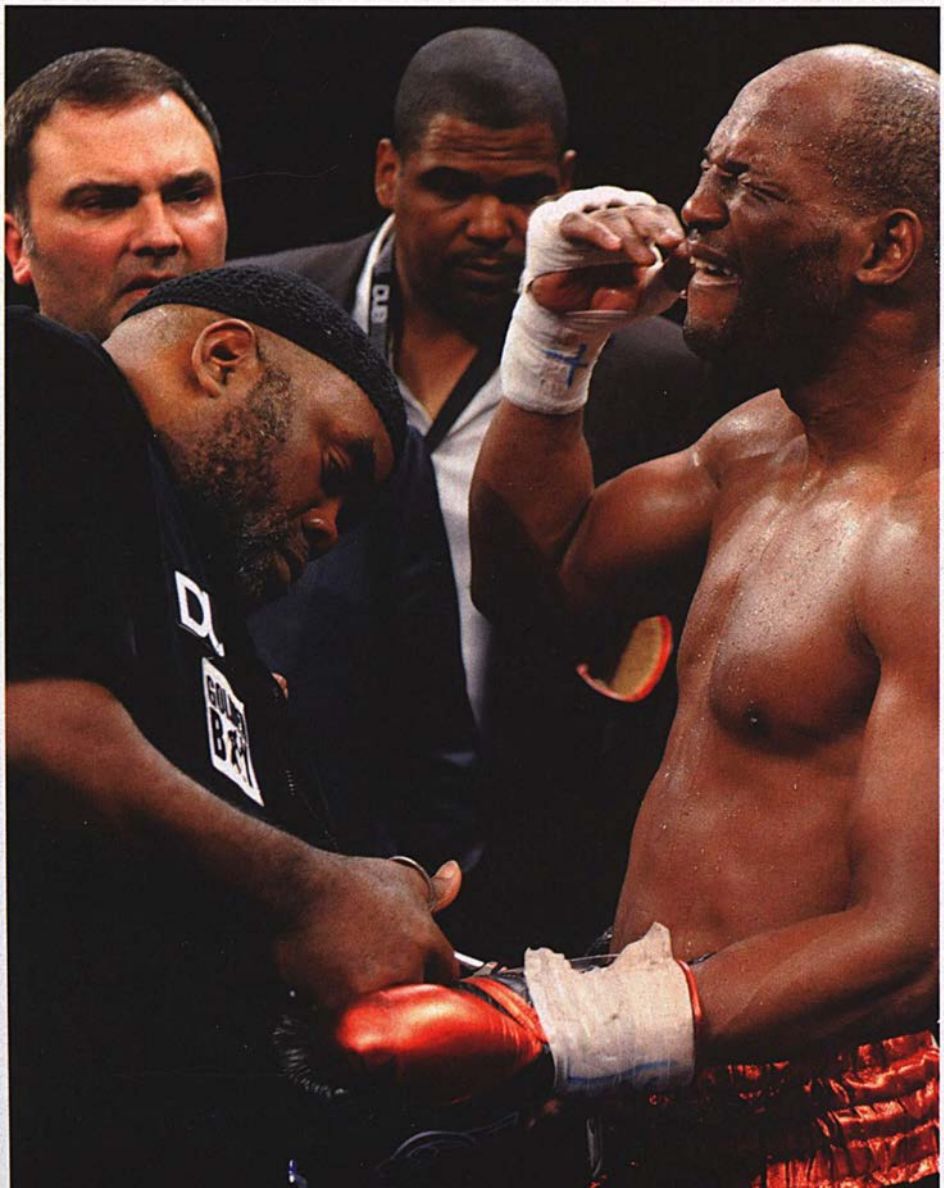
"I'll tell you something else: He's a Hall of Fame trainer.

"He was an even better man."

Mosley said he's going to make sure Richardson is in his Hall of Fame acceptance speech.

"He'll be looking down and I'll still hear that voice," Mosley said, laughing for a moment. "'Swim without getting wet.'"

Richardson was present for many of Bernard Hopkins' greatest triumphs at middleweight and light heavyweight.



ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

THE NEW BOSS

A REMATCH CLAUSE NOTWITHSTANDING, **JESSICA MCCASKILL** IS NOW CALLING THE SHOTS AFTER HER UPSET WIN OVER LONGTIME WELTERWEIGHT CHAMPION **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

JUSTIN CASTERLINE

Nine days after Jessica McCaskill shocked the world and handed Cecilia Braekhus her first pro defeat on August 15, taking all her welterweight title belts in the process, the new champion was already back in the gym in Chicago, handling the deluge of media requests that follow such a career-altering feat.

And as McCaskill answered question after question, speaking about so many intriguing future bouts that needed her as a principal, it was clear that it's good to be the queen.

"Yeah, they gotta come to me," said McCaskill, who also holds a pair of titles at junior welterweight. "We're not giving anything away free. We really worked hard for our position where we're at, so we would fight Katie Taylor at 147. We would figure something out

McCaskill was on the offensive throughout the 10-round welterweight clash and the judges were suitably impressed with her tactics.

INSET: ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM

Braekhus got going after a slow start, but McCaskill was always in her face and firing.

for Amanda Serrano or we might even do the rematch with Cecilia. So right now, it looks like 147 is the play, but we're always ready with multiple playbooks."

Three weeks later, McCaskill and her manager/coach, Rick Ramos, had to call an audible at the line of scrimmage, and if Taylor was Plan A and Serrano Plan B, they were now forced to implement Plan C after Braekhus activated her rematch clause for an early 2021 bout, location to be determined.

McCaskill's response to a request for comment was quick and to the point.

"I'm knocking her out this time."

That's what the kids these days call a mic drop, and the 36-year-old earned that right after a performance that has been years in the making. Yes, her majority decision victory over the then-37-year-old undisputed champion was close, but it was hard-earned and well-deserved, one that McCaskill and Ramos had been chasing for a long time, even before "CasKilla" was on the world boxing map.

You might even say that the pair have been chasing it since 2013, the year McCaskill stepped into Ramos' Body Shot Boxing Club and he saw what the St. Louis native brought to the table.

"The number one thing is the fact that she was here in the gym first and the last one to leave," Ramos said. "I picked up on the fact that she was a gym rat right away. She was always in the gym and always working out. And watching her spar in the beginning, she dropped somebody right away – with a body shot. So between her being early, staying late and watching her spar and being dramatically stronger than a lot of the females that I've come across, I knew right away that this girl was special."

McCaskill knew a little sooner, as she punched her way to the first of three Golden Gloves titles before she even set foot in the "Windy City."

"Before I came to Chicago, my amateur fights, they were usually ending with a lot of blood," she laughs. "So I knew I had power, if anything."

Power, tenacity and a willingness to get her hands dirty in the ring was McCaskill's calling card. Tenacity and a willingness to get his hands dirty outside the ropes was Ramos'.

"I can annoy anybody," he said. "I can get a priest to punch me in the face."

They were the perfect duo. Underdogs among the big dogs of the boxing business, but not afraid of going toe-to-toe with them. No matter what that entailed.

"She used to take her purse from the fight, and if she was making fifteen hundred bucks or a thousand bucks, she would say, 'Rick, I'm gonna buy all the tickets with this,' (club show fighters are often required to sell a certain number of tickets to be on the card) and I would say, 'I'm gonna match it.' So we would buy all her

tickets. We had to sell a hundred, a hundred twenty tickets, and we bought them all because no one would give us a shot."

But there was something to be said for believing and for being persistent. McCaskill turned pro in 2015, and in less than two years, she had compiled a 5-1 record. Ramos thought that was good enough to challenge Irish Olympic hero Katie Taylor, so he did.

"Everybody in Chicago laughed at me," said Ramos. "I thought I could do it."

He did. And while McCaskill lost a unanimous decision in a bout a lot more competitive than many believed it would be, it made an impression. The next quest was Braekhus. Not a truly realistic goal considering McCaskill had just fought Taylor for the lightweight title in late 2017, but those were just details.

While Ramos worked up a plan to get Braekhus in the ring, McCaskill kept winning, earning junior welterweight titles while beating pound-for-pound list member Erica Farias (twice) and the highly regarded Anahi Ester Sanchez.

Now it was time to chase Braekhus at 147 pounds. But the deal for the bout came together much easier than Ramos expected it to. Too easy, in fact.

The night before the fight in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Ramos began to doubt himself. His mom had already lit a pair of candles for Team McCaskill, but the coach/manager needed a little more than divine reassurance.

"I questioned myself the night before the fight, the week of the fight, in terms of, 'Man, if we lose, I don't know anything about boxing,'" he said. "I was shocked that they took the fight. I was shocked that they accommodated our ask in weight. I asked for 145, and I'm like there's no way they're gonna agree to this. And they agreed. Either I'm dead right or I'm dead wrong. They gave me everything I asked for. Is this a suicide mission?"

For Ramos, this was the perfect storm. He watched Kali Reis rock and drop Braekhus in 2018. "And Kali's nowhere near as aggressive as Jessica." He saw Braekhus go from Johnathon Banks to Lucia Rijker and back to Banks before settling on Abel Sanchez as her trainer. And with no crowd in Tulsa, there would be no A-side or B-side when it comes to fan reaction. It was all too good to be true.

"Everything the week of the fight seemed like it was shifting our way," said Ramos. "We pay attention to detail. Matchroom had posted a video of Cecilia working out the week of the fight and she had a whole sauna suit on with the hood up. I said, 'She can't make this weight.' She's from Norway, but it's as humid as shit [in Tulsa]. We're from the Midwest, so humidity is no big thing. I'm like, 'Jess, jump on her.'"

That was music to the ears of McCaskill, who followed the plan to a T, even though she was surprised by Braekhus' strategy.

"I thought she was gonna jab a lot more; I thought she was gonna move a lot more, and I figured either they were gonna do one extreme or the other, either come forward or move," said McCaskill. "And after about the first minute, I realized, 'You're coming forward.' And that's when I shuffled to the right and she followed me, and I said, 'OK, this is how we're gonna do this.' And I just dove in and didn't stop. Not really to my surprise, but just very delightful."

Yes, McCaskill used the word "delightful" to describe her fight with Braekhus. But for the team out of Chicago, it was, because all the hard work and sacrifice paid off with a huge win and plenty of belts for McCaskill's trophy case. And those belts became a focal point in the days after the bout when a video of the new champ returning Braekhus' belts to her in her locker room went viral.

"I thought it was really important for me to give her belts back," said McCaskill. "I could have very easily had security take them back or have my team hand them back, but I have an appreciation for what she's done for the sport, and like we said before, there's never been any bad blood between us. It's just two fighters giving everything they got to try to make history and to climb to the top and stay there. So I wanted to go visit and she obliged."

Braekhus, always classy, said to McCaskill, "I'm so excited to see what you're going to do," and the immediate impression was that the longtime pound-for-pound queen was passing the torch to her foe. McCaskill felt the same way. But a week after the fight, she also knew how a fighter thinks.

"She was very welcoming, and her indirectly passing the torch, that was big. And I don't know if that's something she's gonna stick to," McCaskill said. "She may wake up in two weeks and realize that 'I'm a fighter and this is in my blood and I can't deny it and we may have that rematch.' But it was a very nice moment to have, because some people just feel like they have to create a scene or involve something to make a debacle, and it doesn't have to be like that."

It's a safe bet to say there won't be any bad-blood drama leading to the rematch, either. That's good, because while Braekhus' story has long been an inspiring one for fans of all sports, the tale of a couple Midwest kids making good against the odds isn't too bad.

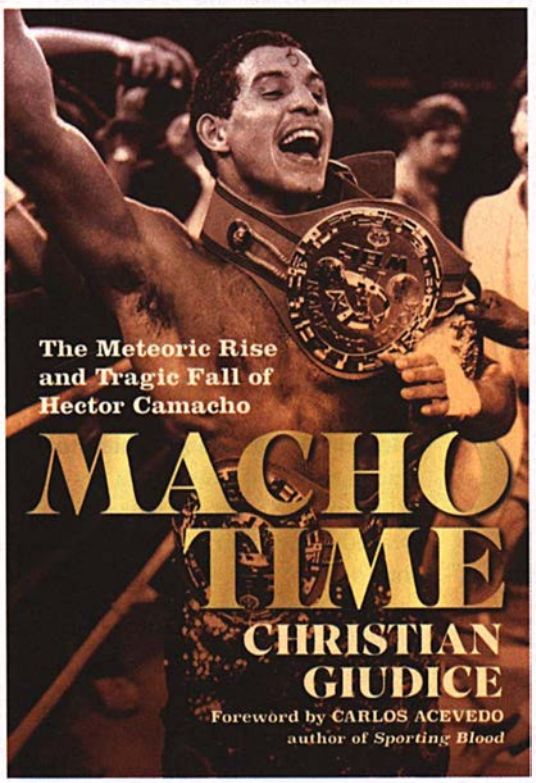
"From the beginning, he told me this is gonna happen," said McCaskill of Ramos. "And I figured the only way I could come out of this clean is if I do exactly what he says, and if it fails, it's not my fault. I've never been able to point the finger at him. And every time he told me something, it always came to fruition."

"Jessica did everything I asked, and I feel like I have to match that," adds Ramos. "If she's gonna be loyal to me, then I'm gonna be 500 percent loyal. She hasn't let me down and I definitely don't want to be the one to let her down. To be part of her journey and get the Katie fight, to watch her go from homeless to buying a house and to not knowing where she's gonna be and then to have all these world titles ... we've done some crazy shit together."

MACHO TIME: THE METEORIC RISE AND TRAGIC FALL OF HECTOR CAMACHO

NO HOLLYWOOD SCRIPT COULD DO JUSTICE TO THE REAL LIFE STORY OF THE 'MACHO MAN'

By **Christian Giudice**



Turning a corner in Spanish Harlem, Hector "Macho" Camacho represented an unfiltered mix of swag, style and, when the occasion called for it, rage. Those close to him loved him dearly; others associated the flair with arrogance. In different circumstances in and out of the ring, Hector presented a vortex of personalities – affectionate and caring, provocative and bumptious, detached and insular. But he was never dull. Moreover, Hector understood how to brilliantly read a situation and adapt accordingly. Oh, and he was the toughest guy on the block. *Don't mess with him.* Those that dared challenge him had to wait for Hector to unlace his beloved roller skates, or to put on his boxing boots, and then it was Macho Time. Anytime. Anywhere.

In the early 1980s when Hector was beginning his professional career, his team, led by trainer Robert Lee (Bobby Lee Velez) and then Billy Giles, traveled to Detroit to get better sparring partners. Moving from gym to gym, the Macho crew left its mark at the famed Kronk, often blitzing through the legendary gym leaving a slew of bodies in its wake. It didn't matter who the opponents were; Hector, sporting the iconic black and yellow Bruce Lee sweatsuit, went up against world champs and anyone else in his path. There was no backing down as Hector challenged anyone and everyone in the gym.

Macho Time (Hamilcar Publications, October 2020) takes the reader back to those Detroit gyms, New York, Florida and everywhere else that Hector stopped along the way. Who was the real Macho – the fighter, friend, and father beneath the exterior? What made him tick? What was he like away from the spotlight? *Macho Time* addresses these questions and provides a unique lens into the life of a man who deftly combined boxing and entertainment. Despite losing Hector at the age of 50 in 2012, no one can forget the impact he had on the sport. A sportswriter perfectly captured Macho's spirit when he said, "Hector shined."

That he did.

The following is an excerpt from Chapter 7: "A Path to Glory" from Macho Time.

One day, Hector sparred with the Kronk mainstay Bret Summers, an undefeated professional at the time.

"I want you, white boy," yelled Hector, pointing at Summers as he entered the gym. "I want you, white boy." Summers then looked to gym owner Emanuel Steward: "Who the hell is this kid running his mouth?" Summers knew Hector by name and growing reputation, but Macho had not yet reached the heights of stardom.

"You don't want to do this. Not with this kid," Steward warned the competitive Summers, who was open to a sparring session. Nothing materialized as Summers went on with his training session after the brief distraction.

About a year later, Hector returned to the gym while Summers was in the middle of another training session. "I want you, white boy."

This time around, Summers responded, "OK, bring it on" and

AL BELLO

talked Steward into letting him face the young phenom. Hector was set to spar fifteen rounds with a couple of different sparring partners, but, unfortunately for Summers, he went first. "I had to fight a fresh Hector Camacho. Boy, oh, boy, did he start roughing me up. His jab came in so fast." After a round of elbows, low blows, and other rough tactics, Summers looked to Steward for answers. "You have to keep going," Steward told him.

"Then, he breaks my nose with a headbutt," said Summers. After the headbutt and some brief sparring, Summers proceeded to pull a "wizard," an old wrestling move, slamming Hector face first into the canvas. This caused both corners to spill into the ring. After the session, Hector went over to Summers and shook his hand as if he had completed a rite of passage.

"He never called me white boy again," recalled Summers.

Although some recalled a slightly different scenario, the violent nature of the sparring session remained the same.

"Emanuel was always trying to find fighters who could beat Hector in the gym," recalled Jerry Villarreal Jr. "When he brought Summers in, Hector busted him up so bad that his father had to step in when it got too bad to say, 'No, no, that's enough.' And he pulled him out."

Some fighters use sparring sessions to focus on specific areas – defense, movement, offensive game plan. But Hector didn't differentiate between the fight and the sparring session. "It was like Hector was fighting for his life every day," recalled Jerry Jr.

Coming to Detroit may have changed everything for Hector. Not only did it allow him to escape the distractions in his hometown, he also developed his own identity in the ring by facing seasoned fighters like Hilmer Kenty. And in the Villarreals (co-trainer/co-manager Jerry Villarreal, his wife and son, Jerry Jr., who took Camacho in whenever he trained in Detroit) he found a family who did not want anything from him and did not judge him for his checkered past. Later, their home became his retreat.

Gaining confidence with every fight, Giles (Billy, Camacho's co-manager) knew his fighter's value. He talked a good game, and the two of them jabbed at each other incessantly. Every time Giles entered a gym with Hector and Pee Wee Rucker in tow, people noticed. *The Macho team is here!* Occasionally, Giles would announce that they had arrived. Boisterous, crude, and fun loving, Giles knew how to have a good time and when to create a scene. He lived on the go and carried his wardrobe in the back of his Cadillac Eldorado. Whenever Giles had to change, he went to the trunk to put on one of his many Adidas sweat suits.

The ongoing street banter between Giles and Hector never ceased, and the friendship away from the ring had a backstory. "Billy Giles was close to Maria (Hector's mother). But Billy was also very close to his [own] mother," said a former girlfriend of Hector's. "Hector saw how close [Billy] was with his mother and he appreciated that. That was the one redeeming quality of Billy. In the ring, he spoke to Camacho like a trainer, and outside of it like a friend."

Always trying to outdo the other, both men fought tooth and nail to get the last word. At that time, there was an old man who used to go out on the ice near Belle Isle and skate in his underwear. Once, when Giles and Hector passed him, Giles started yelling at Hector, "You ain't no Macho Man. *He's* the real Macho Man."

Seconds later, there was Hector out skating on the ice – naked.

"Mach started screaming, 'I am the Macho Man, I am the Macho Man' and wouldn't get back in the car until they conceded that he was indeed the Macho Man," Jerry Sr. recalled.

Finally, Giles relented, "Okay, *you* are the real Macho Man, now get in the car."

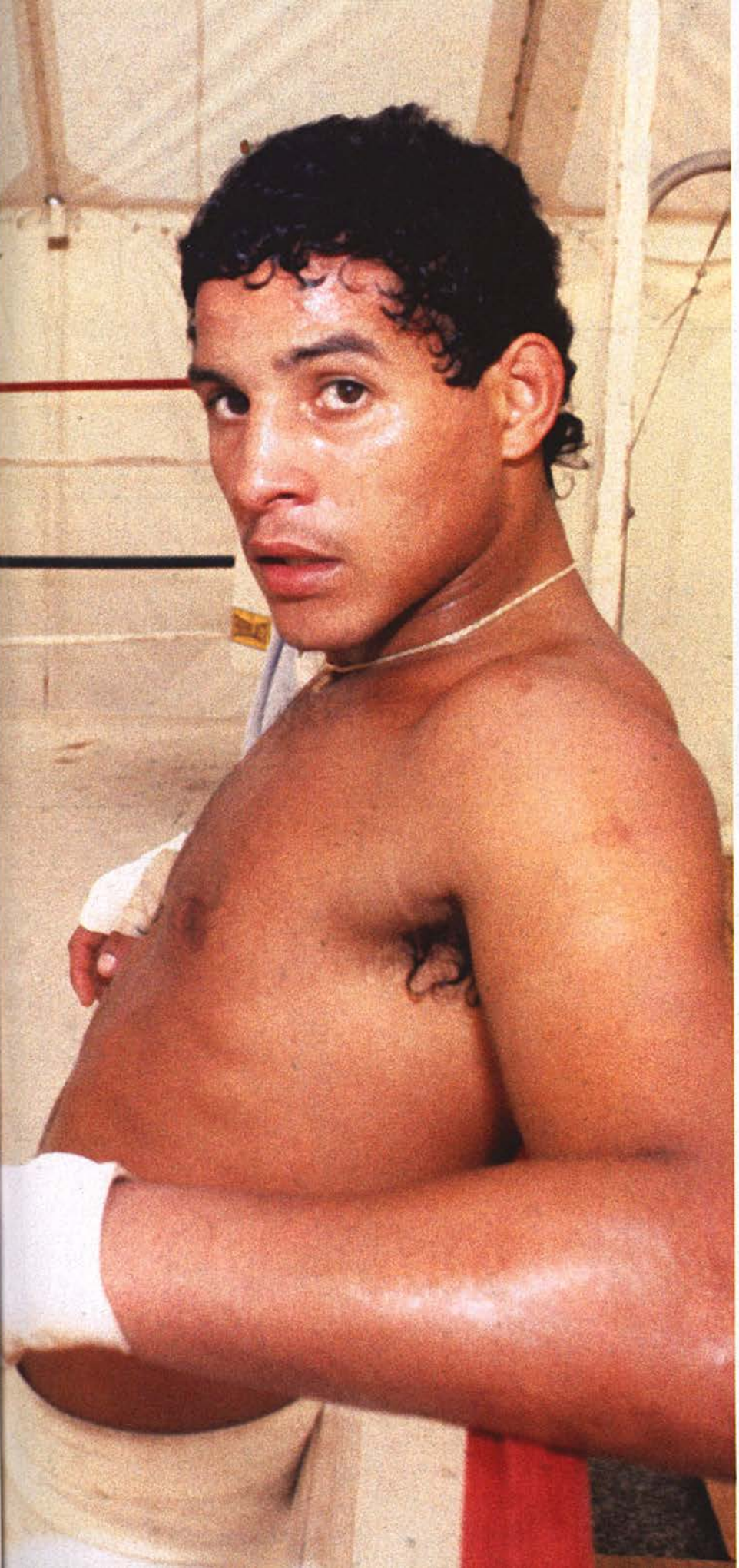
Putting his clothes back on, Hector, the real Macho Man, entered the car with a huge grin. The moment encapsulated everything that made the team click. From Giles knowing what buttons to push, to Hector taking the bait, to Jerry Sr. screaming for Hector to get his "ass in the car," the scene perfectly revealed the roles that each played within the relationship.

Between September 1980 and May 1981, Hector fought seven times. During that span, he started with David Brown, then beat Benny Llanos, Herman Ingram, Robert Johnson, Jerry Strickland, Tomas Enrique Diaz, and closed out May of 1981 with a win over Kato Ali. None of Hector's opponents had a winning record, but Giles and Lee had found a winning formula. Not all fighters come into the professional ranks with a style that translates at that level. Some of the greatest amateur fighters struggled mightily when asked to make that transition, but not Hector.

"We would buy a six-pack and head to watch the fight, and only get to drink one beer because Macho was knocking people out," said childhood friend Richie "Rich" Galvan. "He gave us all motivation. Not just to box, but to achieve anything."

Hector always wanted his mother there, so Maria was also a mainstay at camps. She made sure her son stayed away from women, and, more important, that the women stayed away from him. At times, Maria aggravated her son, but her strict policies came from a good place. She only wanted what was best for him. Maria was also always the first one sprinting up to the ring apron after a fight, often giving her son a bear hug. As Maritza (younger sister of Camacho's girlfriend, Maida Oliva, who gave birth to his first son, Hector Jr.) said, Hector didn't know how to respect women, but there was no one in his life whom he showed such love for as he did his mother.

"My grandmother was supportive," Junior recalled. "That was her baby. My dad wanted her there. She helped him read and sign contracts. He wanted her there for emotional support as well."



Despite the chaos, Camacho did find time to condition himself.

Maria also provided support when Hector traveled for camps later on, but Giles and Lee alternated roles as good cop, bad cop. With the guidance and matchmaking skills of Harold Weston, matchmaker for Madison Square Garden, Hector received plaudits from the world's best fighters. Moving from junior lightweight to catchweights near 135 pounds, Hector, 129 pounds, continued his string of victories with a unanimous eight-round decision over Marcial Santiago on June 25, 1981. Now 8-0, Hector returned on July 24, 1981, to the Felt Forum to face Jose Figueroa, who had replaced Jerome Artis. Hector knocked him out in one round.

"My relationship with Hector was already in place when I got him," said Weston, who worked for Gil Clancy, director of boxing at the Garden. "He only had one fight and I was negotiating with Robert Lee and Billy Giles, and both of them were involved at the time. Back then, everybody knew each other. They needed a place to put fights. And remember this wasn't Sugar Ray Leonard coming in with a corporation. Hector was not a name guy like a Sugar Ray; instead, he had to be groomed."

Over the first ten or twelve fights, Hector established himself as not just a fighter, but also as an attraction. And Weston believed Hector could become the best fighter in the world. With a knack for choosing capable opponents, Weston helped shape Hector by placing him before respected fighters who were going to force him to use a new move or approach each night out.

"Weston called me up and said, 'I got a kid for you. I need you to see him," said matchmaker, trainer, and manager Jimmy Montoya. "'He's got everything. He's fast and a bad motherfucker. I need you to help me groom him for a world title.'"

STAYING FOCUSED

AWARD-WINNING PHOTOGRAPHER **AL BELLO** CAPTURED THE SPIRIT AND INGENUITY OF A GROUP OF AMATEUR BOXERS DETERMINED TO REMAIN FIGHTING-FIT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Photos and commentary by **Al Bello**

Introduction by **Ryan Songalia**

You may not know Al Bello's name, but you definitely know his work. For decades, Bello has been at ringside for many of the biggest fights snapping award-winning photos, beginning with his post-college stint with The Ring in 1990 and then with Getty Images. A Brooklyn native who now lives on Long Island, he has won virtually every award there is to win for a sports photographer.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit in March – with no ringside spots to shoot from for the foreseeable future – Bello was transferred to Getty's news department and was advised to shoot what he could while exercising the necessary cautions. He began covering how the pandemic was playing out in Long Island, photographing empty shelves at stores, a family hugging each other through a plastic drop cloth, how people managed to celebrate Memorial Day and Mother's Day under modified conditions. Still, the call of his favorite sport proved too irresistible, and he sought out fighters to capture with his lens.

Though the Ring Masters Championships (formerly the New York Golden Gloves) had been put on hold and the gyms had been ordered shut by the governor, the boxers continued to train, finding any way they could to stay ready in case the call came to get back into the ring. »

Jonathan Velasquez

Jackson Heights, Queens

If you look at all the rooftop pictures, there was a real urban feel where he's on top of the roof with all the equipment that he carried. You'll see him skipping rope on top of a rooftop in the middle of Queens. It has Manhattan in the background.

This guy would literally carry all of his equipment, heavy bag and all, up the stairs, hang it on the cross bar, and that's what he does every day. He's also a New York City firefighter, and he's got time to do both. He's not gonna be a pro; he's a fireman. But he still loves boxing and he trains like a maniac.

"I had started reaching out to a couple of the trainers I had been in contact with, and they said this kid's doing this and this kid's doing that, and I just started reaching out to them," said Bello. "One by one, they let me into their backyards, their garage, to the beach, wherever they were training." There were precautions to be taken, like wearing a mask and keeping his distance. The unique circumstances of working during a global health crisis meant he'd be without an assistant and would have to handle the lighting on his own, but the end product turned out to be one of his favorite projects of the last few months.

As much as Bello had missed boxing, the fighters also missed having an audience, as they had been training in seclusion the whole time.

All of the boxers Bello shot trained at gyms in Long Island, though one, Jonathan Velasquez, lived in Jackson Heights, Queens. The FDNY firefighter had competed at the previous year's tournament and was a finalist in the super heavyweight open division before losing to Price Taylor.

Though there were the traditional training apparatuses, some had added their own spin to conditioning. One boxer who moonlights as a crew member on movie sets saved a crash pad from a shoot and tied it to a tree as a punching target.

Gyms finally reopened across the state in late August and in New York City in September, though with masks, social distancing and a mandatory 33 percent cap on occupancy. And while the fights may remain halted in New York, the fighting spirit is much harder to extinguish.

"I was impressed mostly with the ingenuity of what the boxers were doing and the motivation that they kept as this pandemic was going on," said Bello. "They were alone but they had the motivation to train, and I just found that inspiring."

Kevens Desroches

Alan Teemer Jr.

Long Beach, Long Island

We went at dawn to the beach where he's from in Long Beach; he just shadowboxed on the beach for me. He was training with the least, and he made the most of it.

He went to a neighbor's house and they had a pull-up bar between two homes, and he was able to do pull-ups there. He was jogging through the streets of Long Beach. The kid was a natural for photos.

Alan Teemer Jr.

Dennis Guerrero

Long Beach, Long Island

He actually owns a CrossFit gym in Oceanside that's closed for the moment, but he turned his garage into this awesome gym that he's able to train in. We had a really good session early in the morning. He did this all in a 10-by-15-foot area in his garage. He had weights; he was clean-and-jerk lifting. He had a double-end bag, heavy bag, weights. He was very motivated. He trains very hard. The light is really nice, just the way I wanted it.

Dennis Guerrero

Zach Blumberg

Oceanside, Long Island

I was extremely impressed with Zach Blumberg. He did that all on his own in his backyard. Even when he got that crash pad, he was working as a grip for Netflix at the time – he handled moving stuff around on the set. That was a stuntman's crash pad that they were throwing away. This was before COVID started. He thought to himself one day, 'I might be able to use that as a punching bag,' and when COVID hit, this is the time to do it.

Raymond Young, Kevens Desroches and Kerry Duperval

Mineloa, Long Island

I had just gotten my drone license and I was anxious to see if I could make it work. So I was able to put it up in the air and do overhead photos of what was going on with the scenery.

The three of them showed up and they did a lot of shadowboxing and hitting the mitts, things you'd do in a gym, only it was in their trainer's backyard. I found that challenging because I had to try and make that interesting. Again, my lights came into play a lot here where I was able to bring it out a little more dramatic.

Khamall Dunkley
Freeport, Long Island

He was boxing in his friend's garage – whatever they needed to do to stay safe, they did. The guy was willing to let him train in his garage. He also helped him hit the mitts as well. A lot of these guys are reliant on their friends' help, some of their own ingenuity and the will to train when nothing's going on.

I was trying to come up with something different at this point. That was his friend's garage that had some equipment set up in. It was lucky for him, and he had a lot of stuff to work with. Still, in a closed space like that, it was squeezed in. A mirror like that is something I hadn't seen before, so I was trying to use it in my work, because that's something different. He had trained on this giant heavy bag that I was able to get underneath; I lit it from above and then I was laying underneath it.

MYTHICAL MATCHUPS

By **Ron Lipton**

World-class veteran referee and former amateur boxer Ron Lipton returns to share his insight, expertise, and imagination in our ongoing fantasy fight series by special guest writers. Mr. Lipton, a member of the New York and New Jersey Halls of Fame, presented Rocky Graziano vs. Rubin "Hurricane" Carter for the inaugural Mythical Matchups featured in the May 2020 issue, and the boxing historian returns to the middleweight division for his follow-up offering: former middleweight champion Dick Tiger vs. current middleweight champ Canelo Alvarez.

Once again allow me the poetic license to create this fantasy fight utilizing an amalgam of eras, officials, people and incidents.

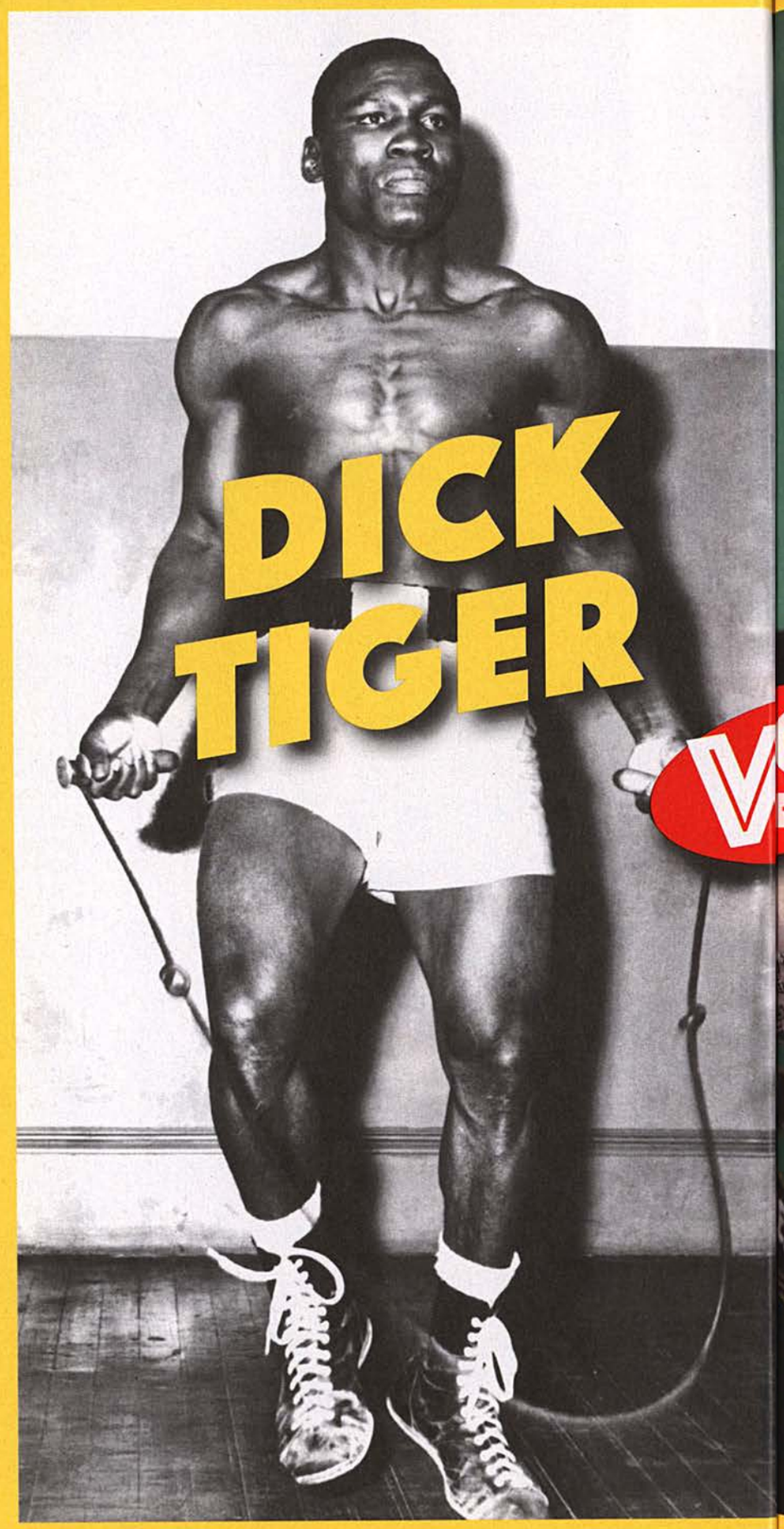
The Dick Tiger-Canelo Alvarez dream fight is between decorated champions of physical similarities. Both stand 5-foot-8 with a reach that is almost identical (71 inches listed for Tiger, 70½ inches for Canelo).

Tiger's lowest weight in his professional career was 158½ pounds, his heaviest was 168½. He remained extremely tight-skinned, ripped and muscular without a sign of fat anywhere on his body throughout his career.

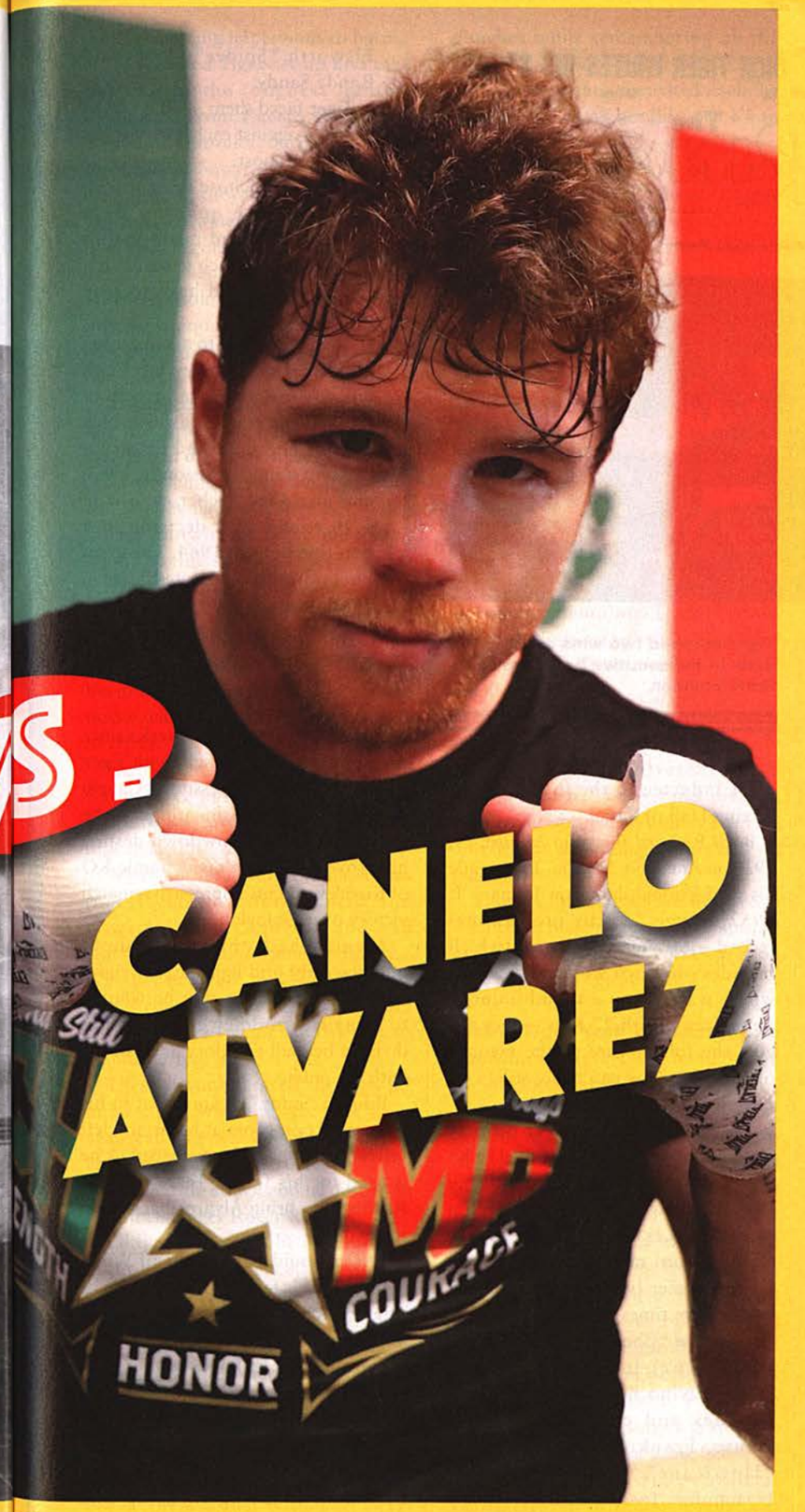
Alvarez's lowest professional weight was 139 pounds on October 29, 2005, against Abraham Gonzalez, when he was 15; his heaviest weight was against Sergey Kovalev at 174½.

Both held the middleweight championship and, despite their stocky builds, both won the light heavyweight championship (Alvarez briefly possessed the WBO version).

Both men have a natural sturdiness



Tiger captured undisputed championships at middleweight and light heavyweight.



to their frames and were blessed with an iron jaw, but the most important asset they share is a fierce mental determination.

So how do I come up with an outcome worthy of The Bible of Boxing?

As in all mythical matchups, I make sure that it involves both fighters on their best nights in the ring.

As a boxing historian who has tremendous respect for the accomplishments of both Alvarez and Tiger and their fighting mindsets, I have gone about this through an arduous in-depth preparation.

I have divested myself from any professional and personal relationship I shared with Tiger to determine the outcome of this fight as I did in the previous mythical matchup between Rocky Graziano and Rubin "Hurricane" Carter.

I do not know Alvarez personally, but I have seen all his available fights and for this article I have watched them all again, studying every move he makes on offense and defense.

I believe Alvarez would hold his own with any other middleweight champion of previous eras as long as they came to fight.

Alvarez's ring record is 53-1-2 with 36 KOs. He has defeated Gennadiy Golovkin, Sergey Kovalev, Miguel Cotto, Shane Mosley, Daniel Jacobs, Amir Khan, Erislandy Lara, Austin Trout, Liam Smith and James Kirkland – all solid-to-elite fighters.

His only weakness – possibly one he shares with Tiger – is that he can be outboxed, as Floyd Mayweather Jr. showed (although Canelo was not as experienced in 2013 as he is today).

I knew Tiger personally.

I was his paid sparring partner, often going from Rubin Carter's training camp to his for more work. I drove alone with Tiger in my car to the Armory in Paterson, New Jersey, to watch Carter fight Johnny Torres

Alvarez has won titles from junior middleweight to light heavyweight and is ranked No. 1 pound-for-pound.

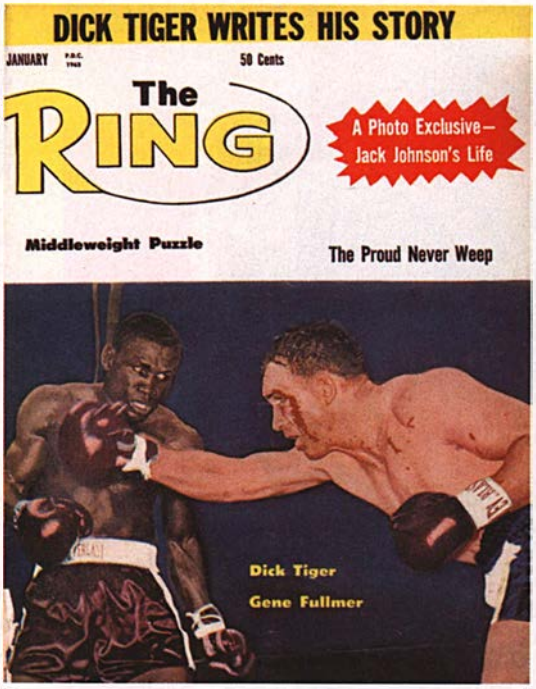
one month before Carter's bout with the former (and future) middleweight champion. Tiger wanted to scout Carter. It was all friendly, but the focus Tiger had in and out of the ring was chilling when he fixated on an opponent. His deadpan stare was reminiscent of Joe Louis and in stark contrast to his infectious smile and usual pleasant demeanor. I boxed many rounds with him in the gym, and his determination to hurt you – which was devoid of anger – was disconcerting. Tiger was 100 percent focused on your destruction once the bell rang.

Outside of the ring, he was a joy to be around. I lived and trained with him in the basement of the old Madison Square Garden and ran with him in the early mornings in Central Park in preparation for his middleweight title-winning rematch with Joey Giardello in October 1965.

In or about 1968, before his devastating loss to Bob Foster, I watched him gradually lose his iron constitution, timing and power due to the early stages of cancer that was malevolently and silently lurking inside him during the final years of his career. He died from it in 1971.

I saw most of Tiger's fights in the U.S. in person from ringside and I've watched every single bout available on film. I visited with him often to cheer him up when he retired and worked as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In later years, I was pleasantly tasked to write the introduction to his life story, *Dick Tiger, The Life and Times of a Boxing Immortal* by Adeyinka Makinde.



Tiger notched two wins and a draw in consecutive battles with Gene Fullmer.

Canelo needs no introduction to present day boxing fans. However, sometimes the sands of time erase the memory of past greats, so for our younger readers who have never heard of Tiger and for our older readers who may not remember the two-division champion, permit me to share some information about the 1991 inductee to the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Born Richard Ihetu on August 14, 1929, in Amaigbo, Nigeria, Tiger made his professional debut on January 1, 1952, at age 23. His professional record – 60 wins, 19 losses (which includes only two stoppages, one of which was due to a thumb injury), three draws, with 27 KOs – does not give the full picture of the menace of the man. One can't rely solely on paper ballistics.

Tiger fought the toughest middleweights and light heavyweights of his era, honing his skills while learning from any mistakes he made vs. fierce competition: middleweight champ Gene Fullmer (who he fought three consecutive times), light heavyweight champ Jose "Chegui" Torres (who he fought twice), former middleweight champs Nino Benvenuti and Terry Downes and contenders Roger Rouse, Frankie DePaula, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Florentino Fernandez, Jose Gonzalez, Henry Hank, Rory Calhoun, Wilf Greaves, Elsworth "Spider" Webb, and Randy Sandy.

Tiger faced them all and scored victories against each. He beat the hell out of most.

Those who chose to fight with Tiger at close quarters were broken down and made to quit or suffered so much damage that the referee would have to stop the fight.

The best chance to avoid getting hit with Tiger's heavy left hook and vicious right hand was to jab, run and stay far away, which is what Giardello did to earn a close 15-round decision in 1963, and also Joey Archer, who won a 10-round split decision in a non-title bout in 1964. The great Emile Griffith outpointed Tiger in 1966 (for the middleweight title), in a bout that several ringside sportswriters had scored for Tiger.

THE MAKING OF THE FIGHT:

It had been almost two weeks since Alvarez demanded the fight with Tiger. The press had been pressuring Canelo to his annoyance, insinuating that he was avoiding the showdown despite his proven mettle in his dynamic KO of Kovalev and his impressive rematch victory over Golovkin.

Alvarez had options at super middleweight and light heavyweight, but he made it clear that he wanted to remain a middleweight, as that division held all the glory and fanfare with the public.

Edilson "Eddy" Reynoso sat in his fight collection room at home and left instructions not to be disturbed as he waited for his father, Jose "Chepo" Reynoso, to bring Alvarez back from the gym.

There would be no films of Willie Pep, one of his favorite fighters who he often watched with awe and respect. Today would be just him and films of Tiger, alone, as he knew the outcome of the bouts and did not want his fighter to see them just yet. One after another, he watched with amazement at how Tiger waded through each opponent, backing them up and dominating them all in brutal fashion

while remaining impervious to harm.

He watched Tiger set up and take out one of the toughest fighters to emerge from Puerto Rico, Jose "Monon" Gonzalez, during a slugfest in Madison Square Garden. Round after round, they traded punches as Tiger calmly waited. Then as Gonzalez pressed Tiger, he walked into a perfectly executed jab, right hand and left hook thrown with chilling precision and power. The sound of the finishing hook made ringside observers wince.

It dumped the iron-jawed Gonzalez face first, crumpling him into a heap of disoriented disbelief on the canvas. He arose wobbling on legs like a newborn colt and the fight was stopped.

The knowledge Eddy possessed about boxing started to torment his private thoughts.

He had just digested the other films of Tiger destroying Florentino Fernandez while withstanding the hardest left hooks "The Ox" could throw without the slightest suggestion of effect.

He watched how Tiger floored Carter twice in the second round and again in the fourth, and the beating that ensued for the next six rounds.

What bothered him the most was that Tiger was more skilled and powerful than Golovkin and had conquered more durable opponents. Was his beloved Saul stronger and more rugged than Gene Fullmer? Could Alvarez punch harder than Rubin Carter?

These thoughts raced through his mind along with the fact that Tiger also beat light heavyweights, including Hall of Famer Jose Torres twice in 15-round title bouts, and he destroyed the much bigger Roger Rouse.

Eddy did not doubt his fighter's abilities or confidence, nor did his father, who felt that Canelo could beat anyone. What bothered him most was that these films showed him one thing: It would be a disaster to stay close to Tiger and slug it out in the trenches.

Most of their success with Canelo was with a style that made his opponents back up. He would break them down with hard, fast punches while remembering all the defensive tactics they taught him. If the knockout shot presented itself, he would take it, as he did with Khan and Kirkland.

When Eddy spoke to his father and they reviewed the films of Tiger together, they both thought the best way to deal with their concerns was, as always, to speak the truth to Saul.

They did not want Canelo thinking they doubted his ability to outpunch Tiger in exchanges, but this man was so different from GGG that their collective boxing genius would not allow them to believe it was the best way to fight the Nigerian. No, their fighter would have to punch and move all night. As Giardello once said, "I wouldn't trade stamps with Tiger." During training camp, both father and son urged the sparring partners to emulate Tiger. Canelo chose to dominate them, and he did this successfully as not one of them could back him up.

It angered him a bit to think his team believed Tiger could possibly hurt or stop him. Alvarez trusted them, but he had not yet met the man who could out-macho him in that ring and he was determined to prove it on fight night.

Finally, Eddy and Jose decided it would be wise to bring in a special guest on fight night for wishes of good luck and some sage advice.

When Tiger was contacted, he immediately agreed to the fight and the boxing buzz spread like wildfire. The Biafra war was behind Tiger now. It was a heartbreaking, soul-draining ordeal. He was eager to move forward and this fight would be the best medicine.

His family was now with him in New York, having moved from Portugal to Cambria Heights in Queens. Tiger was relaxed and happy and did not argue about the 45 percent to 55 percent purse split that Team Canelo demanded. He was an easygoing man and simply grateful to be back in training for a big fight.

That being said, Tiger's trainer-manager team of Jimmy August and Willis "Jersey" Jones demanded that both fighters could not come in over the 160-pound division limit without forfeiting the title and paying a hefty fine at the official weigh-in. There would be no excessive weight gain, either. On fight night, they both had to weigh in again in the dressing room right before the fight. If either was an ounce over a 10-pound allowable gain over the middleweight limit, they would have to pay a $1 million fine to their opponent.

Both were very popular in Madison Square Garden and agreed to the venue. The fight, which was sold out within two hours of the box office opening, would be broadcast live on HBO Pay Per View at a price of $79.99.

During the press tour across the country and the extensive coverage on HBO, the personal contact between Tiger and Alvarez was amiable with no discernible traces of friction. Tiger's smile was so contagious that the usually stoic Canelo seemed charmed by the man's genuine friendliness, so much so that Eddy and Jose had to remind him to maintain a strong mindset.

Tiger playfully said hello to all of Canelo's children – Emily, Maria, Saul Adiel and little Mia Ener, who sat on Canelo's lap at one press conference. Saul also waved hello to Tiger's family, consisting of his mother Rebecca, wife Abigail and all his children: Richard, Grace, Victoria, Gloria, George, Joseph, Justina and Charles Ihetu.

In a face-to-face interview with both men, Max Kellerman asked Alvarez in Tiger's presence, "You two men have shown each other great respect at all times. Will that affect your well-known killer instinct when you get into the ring?"

Alvarez said through his interpreter, "I don't have to hate a man or act like a fool at the weigh-in to do my best in the ring on fight night. I will be ready and I will win."

Kellerman then turned to Tiger: "Dick, you have been very friendly to Canelo. Will that stop you from trying to knock him out?" Tiger, wearing a wide and beautiful grin, replied: "I

was very friendly to Gene Fullmer, Rubin Carter and all the men I have beaten. It does not cost me anything to be nice. I am a professional and I will be the serious Dick Tiger they all have faced once the bell rings. After the fight, we can still be friends."

FIGHT NIGHT

Now come with me to Madison Square Garden. We'll grab a bite to eat with the rest of the fight crowd at the Tick Tock Diner and then stop off at Jimmy Glenn's bar for a drink before we get to our seats.

The fighters and their families have been staying at the Stewart Hotel across the street and are now in their respective dressing rooms.

Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant and Kellerman are calling the fight along with Randy Gordon for HBO, and the cameras are in the dressing rooms of both fighters as we are close to fight time now.

Canelo is up on the big screen. He is shadowboxing with headphones on and no one is even trying to talk to him.

Eddy taps him on the shoulder. He removes the headphones blaring the music that is getting his fighting blood up.

A distinguished man in an impeccable dark suit and tie is standing with the Reynosos waiting to talk to Alvarez. Eddy says, "This is Joey Archer, who beat Tiger in the old Garden, and he is here to wish you luck and to say something to you."

Canelo, a bit surprised, listens as Eddy translates while Archer gently takes Canelo's right hand in his and says, "A great boxer and uncrowned champion named Billy Graham told me this before I won my fights with Dick Tiger and Rubin Carter, and now I am telling you. This right hand is your bucket, your left hand is your brush; go out there and do a paint job on this guy and you will win. I wish you the best of luck, son."

Archer is thanked by the Reynosos. Canelo nods respectfully to the elegant former fighter as Joey turns and strides gracefully back out to his ringside seat.

Eddy and Jose stare deep into Canelo's eyes, waiting for his response to what they have been telling him for eight weeks of training. Canelo, with a dismissive scowl on his face, says, "Luck is for the mediocre. No man can take my title from me. I fear no man."

The scene in Dick Tiger's dressing room is brimming with love and loyalty. Tiger hugs each member of his family with great affection, still smiling. Justina whispers to him, "I love you, Papa. Please be careful tonight." Tiger replies, "I will, don't worry," and kisses her.

Tiger says a loving goodbye to them all as they leave for their ringside seats. As the dressing room door closes, a Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation takes place.

The smile fades from existence, the consummate professional that he is starts to shadowbox and his deadly focus surfaces immediately. It is crunch time now and Tiger is used to it. The sweat pops off him like a pit bull shaking his fur, and he is ready.

The ring walk down the path to pain, blood, guts and battle is next. He dons his blue and white cloth robe with "DICK TIGER/NIGERIA" on the back and a white towel wrapped backward under his robe and over his chest and neck. Cutman Chickie Ferrara carefully puts the allowed amount of Vaseline on Tiger's face.

Head trainer Freddie Brown pulls Tiger to the side and in old-school boxing style growls affectionately at Tiger, "Dick, don't take this fucking kid lightly; he's tough and got both hands."

Tiger looks at Brown and then at Ferrara and Jimmy August: "You mean he hits harder than Rubin Carter, Frankie DePaula, Gene Fullmer, Henry Hank ..."

Freddie holds up a hand to stop Tiger, "OK, OK." Tiger smiles and gives him a hug, "Let's go. Thanks for worrying about me like an old grandma hen. Let me just tell you a little secret: Dick Tiger hits harder than all of them."

The entire corner smiles in agreement as they head out of the dressing room into the legendary arena to the sound of African war drums and the screaming crowd. He is home.

Michael Buffer is in the ring; the lights dim and then come on in a spectacular show. The music continues blaring and the drums are thundering throughout the Garden.

The crowd is screaming with excitement as Tiger comes down the aisle to the ring. There is a strong smell of marijuana coming from the balcony seats and this music is putting people into another dimension.

The war drums are loud, pulsating, and so intoxicating the entire interior of the Garden reverberates with it.

If ever there was music that could make a man want to get up and fight, this is doing it and the entire fight crowd is loving it. People get up and dance as Tiger climbs through the ropes of the legendary ring accompanied by Ferrara, Brown and August. He holds one glove aloft over his head and the killer smile is back in force. He waves and his relaxed posture and confidence radiates into the crowd cheering wildly for all the great fights he has given them here.

Now the music changes as the traditional mariachi and ranchera song "Mexico Lindo y Querido" begins to play. It is beautiful as Canelo enters the arena for his ring walk.

The music is inspiring and speaks volumes of Mexican pride and love of his homeland. He is accompanied by the Reynosos and Marcelo Lopez.

The crowd goes wild with respect and admiration for him; a huge contingent of Mexican fans is in attendance.

The emotive national anthem of Biafra is played at Tiger's request along with the beautiful national anthems of Mexico and the United States.

It is time for Michael Buffer.

"Ladies and gentleman, this is the main event of the evening, the fight we have all been waiting for: 12 rounds of boxing for the unified middleweight championship of the world! It's brought to you by Golden Boy Promotions and Madison Square Garden boxing, sanctioned by the

New York State Athletic Commission, Executive Director Kim Sumbler and Director of Boxing Matt Delaglio.

"The three judges scoring from ringside assigned by the New York State Athletic Commission are Harold Lederman, Ron McNair and John McKaie, and inside the ring, the man in charge of the action when the bell rings is Wayne Kelly.

"Now the officials are ready, the fighters in the ring are ready, and for the thousands in attendance and the millions watching around the world: Are you ready? Ladies and gentleman... LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE!"

Buffer's famous introduction thunders through the Garden, and around the world, the boxing crowd explodes in response.

"Introducing first in the blue corner, wearing the blue trunks with white trim, weighing in officially at 159½ pounds with a record of 60 wins, 19 losses and three draws with 27 knockouts, the lineal two-time middleweight and former light heavyweight champion of the world, from Nigeria, DICK TIGER!" The crowd's response is deafening as Tiger nods his head graciously.

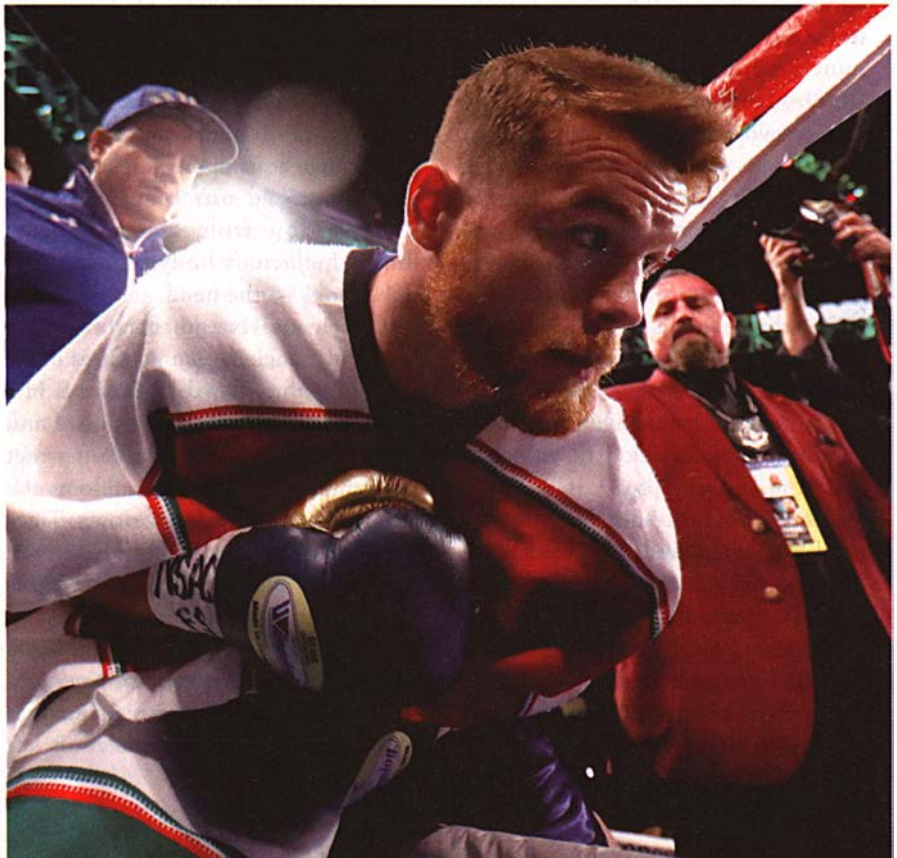
"And in the red corner, wearing the black trunks with gold trim, weighing in officially at 160 pounds even, with a record of 53 wins, one loss and two draws with 36 knockouts, hailing from Guadalajara, Mexico, the Ring Magazine, WBC, IBF, WBA, WBO middleweight champion of the world, the former junior middleweight champion, the former super middleweight champion, the former light heavyweight champion of the world and the pride of Mexico, SAUL 'CANELO' ALVAREZ!" The cheers for Alvarez are equally thunderous.

Kelly, the respected veteran referee and Vietnam veteran, calls the fighters and their chief seconds to the center of the ring. Canelo stares intently at Tiger.

"I've given you the rules of the New York State Athletic Commission and your instructions in the dressing room. Obey my commands, protect yourself at all times and good luck to you both. Touch gloves now."

Tiger has his head down. They briefly touch gloves and go back to their corners.

The proud Alvarez has never lost a fight at the middleweight limit.



AL BELLO

FIRST ROUND:

Canelo comes out with his gloves high and circles Tiger, whose stance is wide with his gloves held in the traditional stalking method he has used since he turned pro.

Tiger presses forward while tapping his boxing gloves together, as is his habit.

As Canelo backs toward the ropes, he explodes with a blazing four-punch combination, trying to rip through Tiger's guard. Three straight punches land on Tiger's arms and the left hook to the body is blocked by Tiger's right elbow as Canelo spins off to the side.

Mexican fans loudly cheer Canelo's effort and it emboldens him as he meets Tiger in mid-ring. Eddy Reynoso yells for Canelo to keep moving.

He ignores this and exchanges with Tiger, which is what Tiger was hoping for as he immediately trades with Canelo. The Mexican star has faster hands and lands a right to the body, misses a hook to the head and takes a hard right hand and left hook to the body from Tiger.

The Bell rings. **10-9 Canelo.**

Canelo's team heaps praise on him in the corner. He tells Eddy he is fine.

In Tiger's corner, Ferrara leans through the ropes and says, "You hurt him to the body. Let him do his thing and be patient."

SECOND ROUND:

Both men immediately try to back the other up. Tiger welcomes the exchanges in close. He cannot be moved backward but has now backed up Canelo with hard body shots.

Canelo answers with crisp, hard combinations, but they don't hurt Tiger, who aims punches into Canelo's midsection and side. Tiger lands a crunching right hand to the side of the jaw and Canelo wobbles as his feet betray him. Tiger is on him and leaps in to throw his patented left hook.

Canelo is hurt but in full control as he weaves deftly under that hook. Instead of backing up, he moves in and attacks behind a one-two combination that gets between his antagonist's gloves and seemingly stuns Tiger.

Canelo, still shaken, does not follow

up but grabs and holds as Tiger has thrown a salvo of hard shots to the body and head.

Canelo takes a half step back while taking a hard right high under his left arm to the upper part of the rib cage. His right glove drops a few inches and a whistling left hook from Tiger lands on the right side of his jaw. It violently shakes Canelo's head the way one would in a car that was struck by a truck from behind.

Tiger's follow-through is so intense that the left hook whistles through the air as Canelo crashes onto his behind so hard that his head snaps back (but it does not hit the canvas, to the relief of his family and fans).

Tiger runs to the white neutral corner as the alternate referee jumps from his ringside chair to yell loudly into the microphone, giving Kelly the count of 4.

Kelly is on his knees in front of Canelo giving him the count, "5, 6, 7," Canelo is up with determination burning in his eyes like fire, "8... Take a step forward. Take a step to the side. Esta bien?"

"Si, si, yes, I am fine," Canelo replies as Kelly wipes off his gloves.

Kelly waves Tiger out of the neutral corner and the bell rings to end the round.

During the minute rest period, the replays have the crowd collectively responding to the knockdown.

The HBO crew is unanimous on several points: One, that Tiger is too dangerous to exchange punches with. Two, Canelo has the heart of a champion and his courage is beyond question. Three, Canelo was doing well until he stopped using his superior assets of hand speed and leg movement. Four, when asked about the referee, Randy Gordon praised Kelly as one of the best in the business who gave Canelo every chance to continue. **10-8 Tiger.**

THIRD ROUND:

Canelo leaves his corner rejuvenated – the result of a professional team that reassured their fighter without yelling or pleading with him, but by sternly maintaining their sacred rapport and getting him to agree to change his tactics. He looks fully recuperated, but only time will tell.

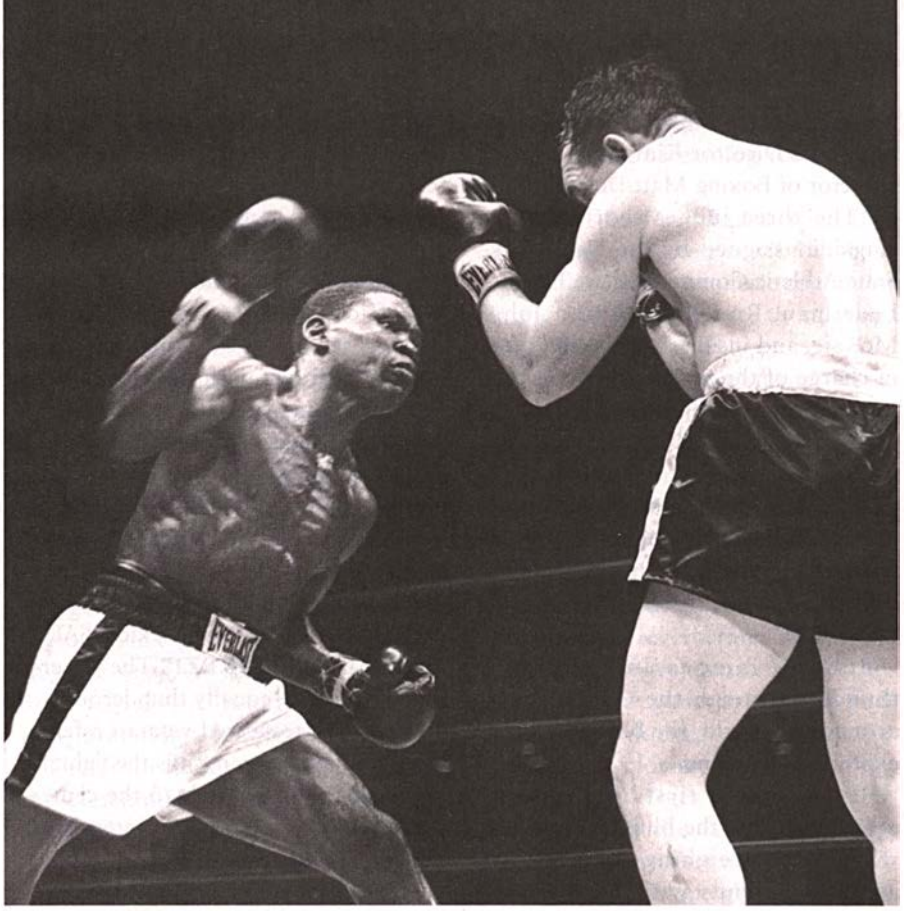
Tiger stalks as his corner yells for him to hurt Canelo again and not allow him to recover.

As Tiger presses the action, Canelo does not run but moves laterally, punching on the fly. Canelo boxes fluidly, landing fast combinations. The crowd screams its support, not only for his show of bravery but for bringing the fight to Tiger.

Tiger catches stiff straight lefts and rights between his gloves as Canelo times him. When Canelo dips to the side to throw the "gancho" (Mexican-style hook to the body) Tiger catches it with his right elbow, not allowing it to get through to his liver or kidney, and then makes Canelo pay with right hands.

However, Canelo's left hooks to the head land with thuds and he catches Tiger on the turn with jabs and one-twos that keep the Nigerian veteran at bay.

The bell rings, both turn away and respectfully return to their corners. **10-9 Canelo.**



Tiger takes the fight to Gene Fullmer in their first encounter.

FOURTH ROUND:

Canelo comes out moving laterally and continues boxing. He lands jabs on the pursuing Tiger, but now Tiger is gradually cutting the ring off as he ups his tempo with more determination.

Tiger maneuvers Canelo to his own corner now and doesn't allow him to move out of it. Tiger is fighting low from a crouch as he blasts hellacious body punches and left hooks to the head.

Canelo twists and turns to avoid the shots, ducks down and fires back, bringing the crowd to its feet. His left hooks slam into Tiger's head and body, but Tiger's counter shots exact a frightening effect on Canelo as the younger man's eyes glaze over. Tiger obviously hits harder and his veteran ring savvy makes many of Canelo's punches seem ineffective.

Tiger rocks Canelo with multiple hooks. Finally, Canelo grabs Tiger and spins out of the kill zone. As he does so, we see a very bad cut over his left

eye. The crimson cascades down his face in rivulets onto his chest.

With a full minute left in the round, Tiger tries to finish Canelo. He pins him to the ropes again and beats him brutally with salvos of punches that force Canelo to navigate to the ring center. However, Tiger stays on him like an avenging demon, nailing Alvarez between and around his gloves. Bruises and contusions seem to appear out of nowhere on Alvarez's face.

When the bell rings, Kelly looks closely at Canelo, who walks bravely and without wobbling to his corner. **10-9 Tiger (almost a 10-8).**

Between rounds, Kelly and Dr. Nitin Sethi visit Canelo's corner. The doctor says he can continue, and so he will.

The Mexican fans sing to Canelo to invigorate him.

Meanwhile, the HBO crew assesses what they have witnessed.

"He is now experiencing what Gene Fullmer, Rubin Carter, Jose Gonzalez, Florentino Fernandez and all the rest had to endure," says Merchant. "GGG is a great fighter and Canelo handled all he had, but Tiger is a different kind of fighter entirely."

ROUNDS 5-11:

Tiger continues to pick up the pace and repeatedly hurts Canelo, who has not stopped moving as he can hardly endure any close-quarter exchanges without being shaken badly.

He is now in survival mode, although flashes of brilliance and courage carry him to the 11th round without knockdowns. However, he has taken so much punishment that Kelly and the ringside doctors once again visit his corner prior to the final round. Alvarez and the Reynosos plead with them to allow the fight to continue.

Tiger's corner lets him know that the referee and doctors are close to stopping the fight.

Tiger listens intently and then looks down at ringside. He sees Canelo's wife and children crying, and it touches his heart as he awaits the bell for the last round.

Brown picks up on this and gives Tiger a little slap: "Dick, don't start this shit; this is business. Do your fucking job like he would do to you. You have a family too, so don't ease up. Get this guy out of here before he cuts you or gets in a lucky punch."

Tiger knows what he must do and says nothing.

THE 12TH ROUND:

Kelly makes them touch gloves in center ring.

Tiger looks at the bruised and battered face of his brave fellow champion and thoughts of the Biafra war, where the enemy showed no mercy to his friends and loved ones, skipped across his mind in a millisecond. No one ever showed him mercy in life or the ring.

He rises above it with God in his heart and an admiration for a foe that only a championship-level veteran of many ring wars could feel. Canelo does everything he can to win the round. He meets Tiger head on, throwing punches as fast and hard as he can, but his hands are a bit slower, his reflexes, depth perception and stamina are impaired by the cut, facial swelling and the dull ache of Tiger's body shots.

Canelo's heart is still there and the entire crowd, not just the Mexican fans, collectively cheers him on.

Tiger sees openings to finish the fight but throws jabs, lazy left hooks and pushes some right hands out toward Canelo, combos that fall way short of the mark. He grabs, holds and throws some hard punches to Canelo's arms and shoulders, avoiding the cut eye and chin. Tiger accepts the attacks from Canelo and weathers the 11th-hour storm by weaving under shots and blocking the rest.

The bell rings, ending the fight, and both men embrace. Tiger whispers to him, "You are the bravest fighter I have ever met. I will always respect you."

Tiger goes back to his corner and Ferrara knowingly says to him, "You can't fool me, Dick, you are one hell of a champion and a decent man."

HBO's commentators praise the courage of Canelo and the force that is Dick Tiger.

Merchant says, "I have a question or two for Dick Tiger regarding the 12th round, but let's wait for the decision first."

Buffer announces the score cards:

"Ladies and gentleman, we have the decision. All three judges are in agreement. Judge Harold Lederman scores it 116-111, judge Ron McNair 116-111 and John McKaie 116-111, all for the new undisputed middleweight champion of the world – Dick Tiger!"

Merchant joins Tiger in the ring for the televised post-fight interview. "Dick, I congratulate you on a dominant performance, but I have a hard question to ask you. Did you purposely take it easy on Canelo and carry him in the 12th round? It seemed like you eased up on purpose."

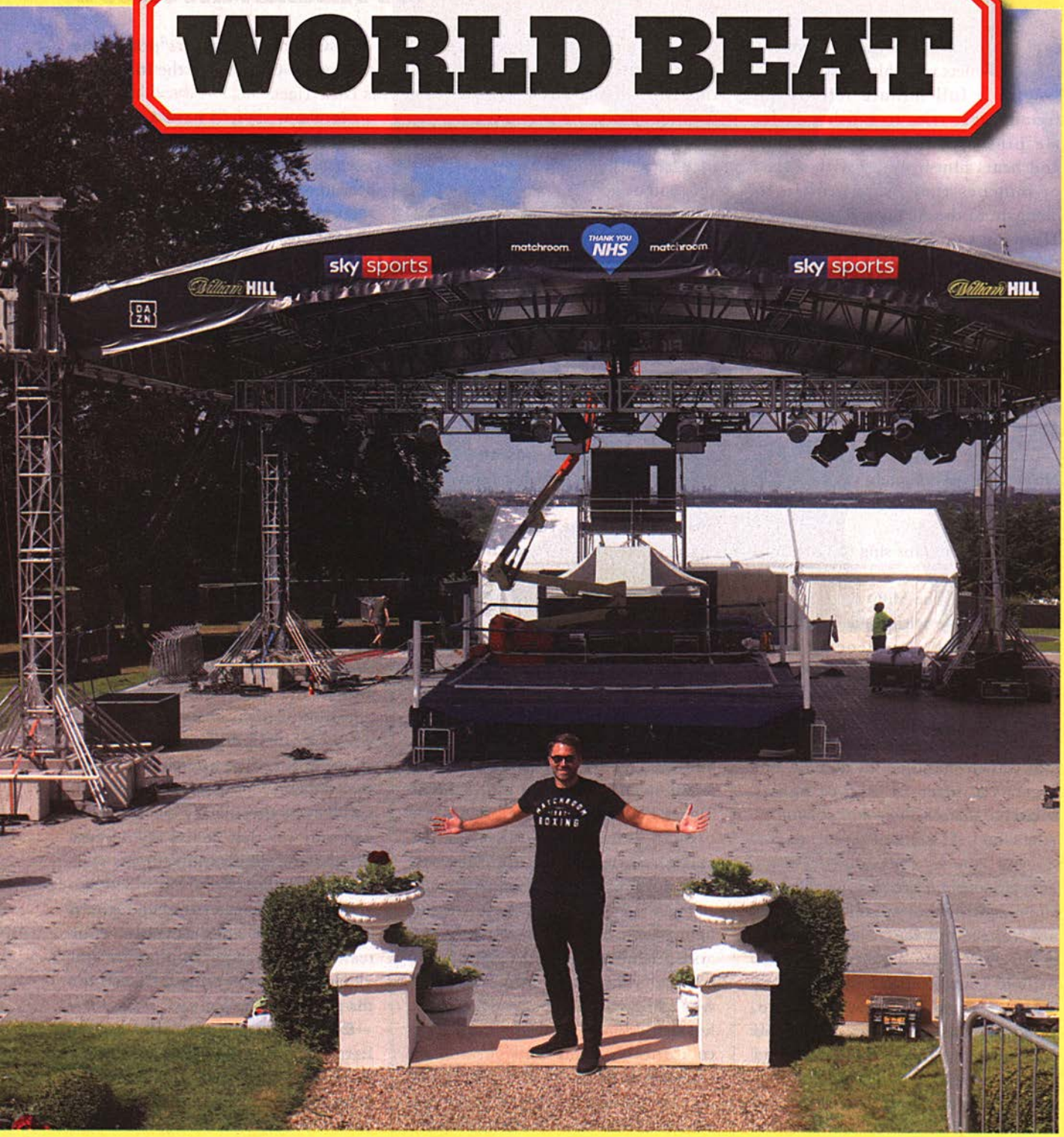
Tiger: "First of all, I want to thank my family for being here and all the fans. In answer to your question, Canelo is a great fighter. I was very tired in the 12th round and chose not to take any chances with such a dangerous champion like Saul. I did not take it easy on him and will only say that he has my deepest respect and admiration for his skill and courage."

Merchant: "Let us get Canelo over here with Eddy Reynoso. Your team did a great job on that cut and all credit goes to you and Canelo for the great fight he put up."

Eddy Reynoso: "Thank you, Larry. I am so proud of Saul I cannot put it into words; he is the bravest fighter I have ever seen. No one could have stood up to Dick Tiger like Saul did tonight. No shame in losing to such a great champion. We will be back, I promise you."

Canelo: "Tiger is a great fighter. I thought I won more than four rounds, but all respect to Tiger; he was the toughest and strongest fighter I ever faced. When my cut heals up, I would love to fight him again. Thank you to all my fans; I love you all and I will be back.... VIVA MEXICO!"

WORLD BEAT



U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

Promoter Eddie Hearn's month of four *Fight Camp* events in the gardens of the Matchroom headquarters outside London proved a success in lockdown, with limited attendance permitted, as Alexander Povetkin tore up the script and changed the narrative with the final blow of the series. It only takes one punch to change everything in boxing, and nowhere more so than in the heavyweight division. It spelled drama and disappointment for Dillian Whyte, with the contender's immediate world title aspirations blown away when the Brixton fighter was stunningly knocked out by the Russian veteran in a spectacular fifth-

Eddie Hearn played king of the castle at Matchroom HQ, but not all of the results went his way.

round turnaround with a corkscrew left uppercut from hell.

It will be watched forever and be seen as one of the great single-punch knockouts in the division's recent history. The shocked silence among the meager audience was in contrast to a fight in which the Briton had looked comfortable and in control while outboxing the former Olympic champion. He had already hurt Povetkin with body shots and dropped him twice in the fourth round, the one before Whyte was put to sleep and crumpled to the canvas.

"It was a shock, and Dillian almost had that fight in the bag," said Hearn. "There is a rematch clause, and the first thing Dillian said to me afterwards is, 'Get me the rematch.' We will be exercising that rematch clause and getting the fight on later this year. I do believe Dillian can come back and avenge defeat."

Indeed. They will meet again on November 21, with the mandatory WBC heavyweight challenger status at stake. It was always a risky fight, and Whyte – not to mention Hearn – knew it, but they gambled and the anticipated world title contest has evaporated for now. What must stick in the craw for Whyte is that he has laid claim to a world title challenge for more than 1,000 days as either the WBC's No. 1 challenger or, more recently, mandatory challenger.

This was the fourth and last of the *Fight Camp* series during the month of August on the 15-acre site of Matchroom Sport, in Brentwood, Essex. Whyte's second career defeat was watched by British heavyweight rival and unified beltholder Anthony Joshua, looking lean and fit as a member of the Sky Box Office broadcast presentation team. Whyte will be bitterly disappointed by the outcome, but as he explained to me inside his Winnebago placed inside the boxing bubble in which we were all tested and had to wear masks indoors, he has been a proficient risk-taker since growing up in poverty as a child in Kingston, Jamaica. But this was heavyweight boxing at its most dramatic and emphatic. Some things will never change. The survival instinct of "The Bodysnatcher" is one of them.

In the post-Covid landscape of professional boxing, the boxing bubble feels like the new normal. The buildup to the first major U.K. pay-per-view event since COVID-19 took place in half of a hotel, with fighters and staff numbering around 100, and a three-minute shuttle bus to "Matchroom Square Garden." With all trapped inside the hotel from Tuesday of fight week until the denouement late on Saturday night, there was a remarkable air of camaraderie, and a lack of testosterone-fueled pre-fight hype. Unique.

Hearn rightly pointed out that all involved were "savoring being at an event again." Hearn lives for big occasions such as this, and *Fight Camp* was pulled off with aplomb, pyrotechnics and plenty of very good fights up to the final night climax.

"There is a sense of 'we are all in this together,' and people have responded as such," said Hearn, who acknowledged that Matchroom took a financial hit due the lack of a live gate.

Preceding Whyte's loss to Povetkin, Katie Taylor retained all the world lightweight belts and the Ring Magazine title in a second thrilling encounter with Belgian Delfine Persoon to prove beyond any doubt that the undefeated, undisputed champion is the queen of the 135-pound division. The gallant Irish boxer did it with poise, winning by unanimous decision – scores of 98-93, 96-94 and 96-94 – in another fight replete with nonstop action. In the rarefied atmosphere ringside, your correspondent scored it by two points for Taylor. Persoon was once again all over Taylor like a vicious rash, as she was at Madison Square Garden in June 2019.

It was in many ways a battle similar to their first meeting, itself a thrilling, brutal 10-round war in which Taylor completed her collection of belts after claiming the inaugural Ring championship and Persoon's WBC title by majority decision, the judges scoring 96-94, 96-94 and 95-95 for a contest that saw neither of the protagonists take a backward step. And this was as breathtaking as that night, yet Taylor was smarter this time, using her footwork, jab and left hook effectively as Persoon attempted to apply pressure from the very first bell. Taylor made Persoon miss time and again early, countering as Persoon fell in, clumsily at times. The problem for Taylor was that even her heaviest counters barely put a dent in her rival, and although the Irishwoman was the better boxer, it was Persoon who imposed herself physically in Rounds 4 and 5. As the fight wore on, Persoon raged forward relentlessly, Taylor, landing a big right hand in the sixth, was suddenly back into a fight in a phonebooth, similar to the encounter they had in New York. But the champion prevailed with her boxing skills through the 10th and won a hard-fought victory.

In August and September, Frank Warren's Queensberry Promotions also had a series of cards with broadcast partner BT Sport, both in their studios and at the York Hall in Bethnal Green. Daniel Dubois, Joe Joyce and Anthony Yarde all enjoyed victories and will be on a card at the O2 Arena Docklands on October 24 – on the condition that crowds are permitted due to British Government guidelines on COVID-19.

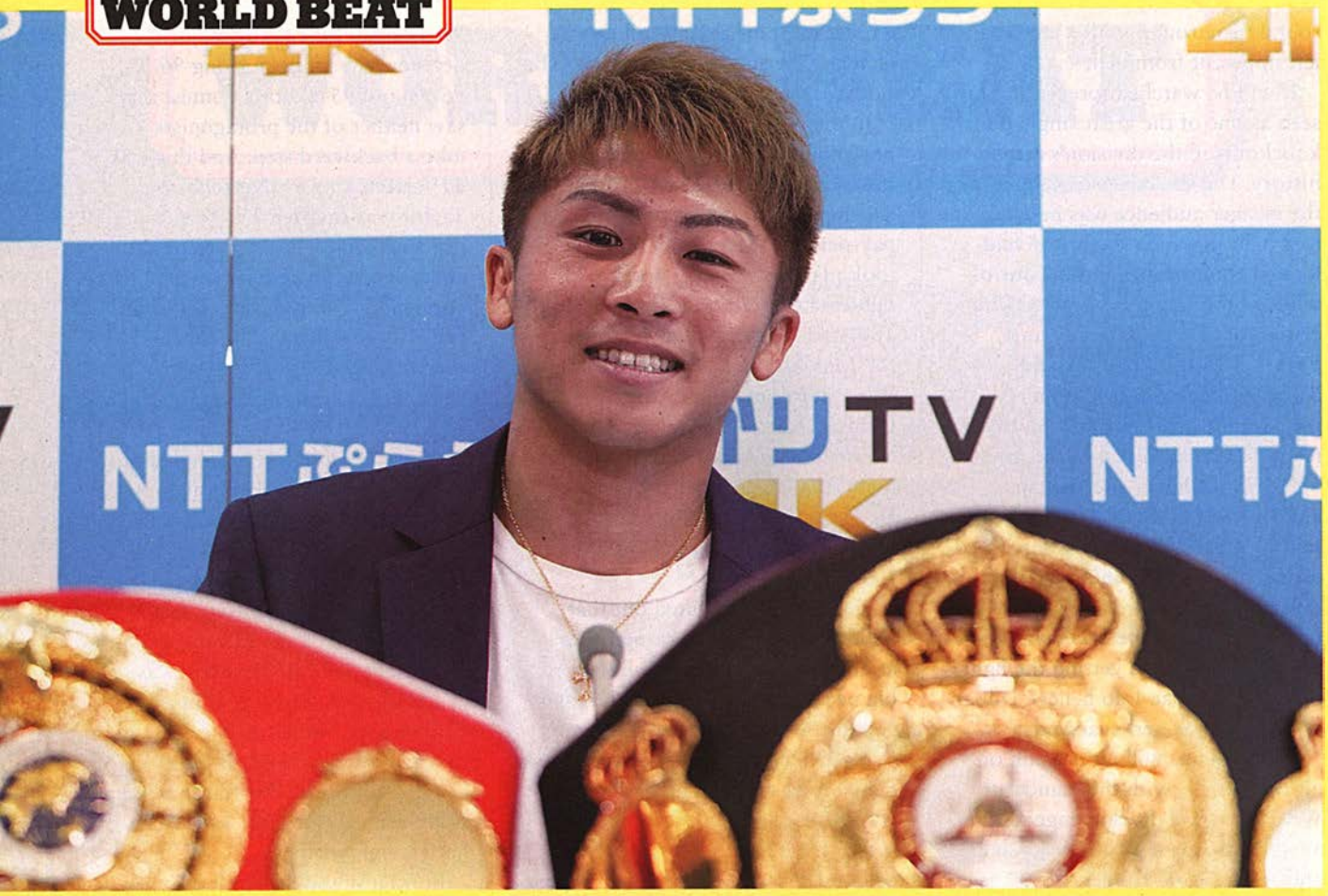
Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for the London Telegraph.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Japanese boxing is getting back to normality, step by step, during this unforeseen pandemic that has hampered so many lives and businesses in 2020.

As the government lifted the state of emergency nationwide on May 25, the Japan Boxing Commission



Naoya Inoue will make his Top Rank debut inside the Bubble at the MGM Grand.

(JBC) and the Japan Pro Boxing Association (JPBA, the union of licensed boxing club owners) started working together with experts to arrange precise guidelines for resuming business with preventive measures for COVID-19.

The JBC distributes medical questionnaires to each boxing club for health screening of all daily visitors to the gym. It requires all boxers to submit these forms whenever visiting other gyms for sparring (which is only permitted for scheduled fights). It also presents a protocol for event operations detailing the points of screening, social distancing and sanitizing to prevent possible contamination. All fight officials at ringside have to wear protective face shields and masks. Referees work without face coverings to prevent any error in judgment in the ring, but they change their shirts and gloves before every assigned bout.

It should be appreciated that the Japanese boxing community has contained the COVID-19 spread to a total of 23 cases since the first two professional boxers tested positive in April so that cards on hold could get back on track. The central regional Rookie of the Year tournament in Aichi prefecture on July 12 was the first boxing event since the JBC's suspension of scheduled events at the end of February. Limited audiences began to be allowed for events in Okinawa and at Korakuen Hall in August.

It looks like Japanese boxing will keep its tradition of annual events, such as the Champions Carnival, which matches the national champions of each weight classes with top contenders, and the national Rookie tournament; the final has been pushed back to early 2021, but regional victors will be finalized by the end of the year.

★★★★

Former WBC flyweight titleholder Daigo Higa (16-1, 16 KOs) will return in a 10-round bantamweight bout vs. the unbeaten but inexperienced Seiya Tsutsumi (5-0-1, 4 KOs) on October 26 at Korakuen Hall. It will be the first fight for Higa with a new team; he left his old stable at Shirai-Gushiken Gym to join up with the newly established Ambition Gym, where he could reunite with his longtime trainer, Joji Nogi, who resigned after Higa lost his world title on the scale and suffered his first professional loss to Cristofer Rosales in April 2018. Higa returned to the ring with a sixth-round stoppage of Jason Buenaobra in February, overcoming 22 months of inactivity, but he did not look sharp in victory. The Tsutsumi fight will be his true "restart" as a fighter, with his reliable trainer beside him.

"I'm having a great camp now, and I will get a KO to make a good

statement for the next step," Higa said during an online media conference in early September.

Nogi stated: "I let him improve movement, power and tactics much more than when he was a 112-pound world champion. That way we can look to winning a world title at bantamweight."

Hard times may ripen the naturally buoyant puncher mentally, too. The popular 25-year-old has just embarked on a new chapter.

Ring Magazine/WBA junior flyweight champion Hiroto Kyoguchi will face undefeated Thanongsak Simsri (14-0, 12 KOs) on November 3 in his hometown of Osaka. With a May ring return postponed due to the pandemic, it will have been a year since Kyoguchi's last fight, a unanimous decision over veteran challenger Tetsuya Hisada.

Watanabe Promotions is preparing for this event extra carefully. Visas are still limited, as the Japanese government has not yet removed the restriction on overseas visitors from 159 countries and areas. Simsri, a 20-year-old Thai who is managed by Green Tsuda of Japan, is likely to be admitted, and his team accepts the condition that officials could all be from the local commission. The promotion will still have a replacement contender ready for any contingency. The fight site expects up to 2,000 people, half of the venue's capacity. It will be streamed live on Kyoguchi's YouTube channel.

Former WBO 130-pound titleholder Masayuki Ito (26-2-1, 14 KOs) will continue his comeback vs. unbeaten Hironori Mishiro (9-0-1, 3 KOs) in a non-title 10-round lightweight bout on November 5 at Sumida City Gymnasium in Tokyo. While Ito is rated No. 6 at 130 pounds by The Ring, he says his best weight class is lightweight. Mishiro will be his second fight since losing his title to Jamel Herring in May 2019. Both Ito and Mishiro appeared at a press event on August 31 to announce the matchup.

"I used to spar with him a lot around the time I won the world title. I will give it all. I have to break him down," said Ito, who wants to prove he deserves another title shot by beating the hungriest of the domestic up-and-comers.

For Mishiro, it is a great opportunity to get Ito's position. "I have admired him since I was an amateur, but I always wanted to overcome him. I will do it by all means," Mishiro boldly said. This anticipated "crossroads" contest will be streamed live by A-SIGN BOXING.

★★★★

The long-awaited Las Vegas debut of the "Monster" is finally set. Ring/WBA/IBF bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue (19-0, 16 KOs) will defend his titles against Australian Jason Moloney (21-1, 18 KOs), who is rated No. 3 by the WBA, No. 4 by the IBF and No. 6 by Ring Magazine, on October 31 at Top Rank's Bubble inside the MGM Grand casino.

Inoue's first fight in Las Vegas was originally scheduled to be a unification bout vs. WBO beltholder John Riel Casimero on April 25.

"Although the (Casimero) fight was canceled, I have kept myself ready for whenever my next fight comes," Inoue said during an online media conference from the Ohashi Boxing Gym in Yokohama on September 9. Inoue said he took "a good extra time" to have no worries about the facial injuries that he suffered during his 12-round Fight of the Year with Nonito Donaire last November.

"I have to be very cautious and prepared for Moloney, as he has good craft and technique – more than Casimero, in a sense – as well as toughness and stamina," Inoue said of his new opponent, who he watched drop a close split decision loss to Emmanuel Rodriguez from ringside two years ago. But he concluded, "It is up to my conditioning."

Inoue will be the first Japanese boxer to travel overseas to fight in a "bubble" environment situated in the U.S. RING

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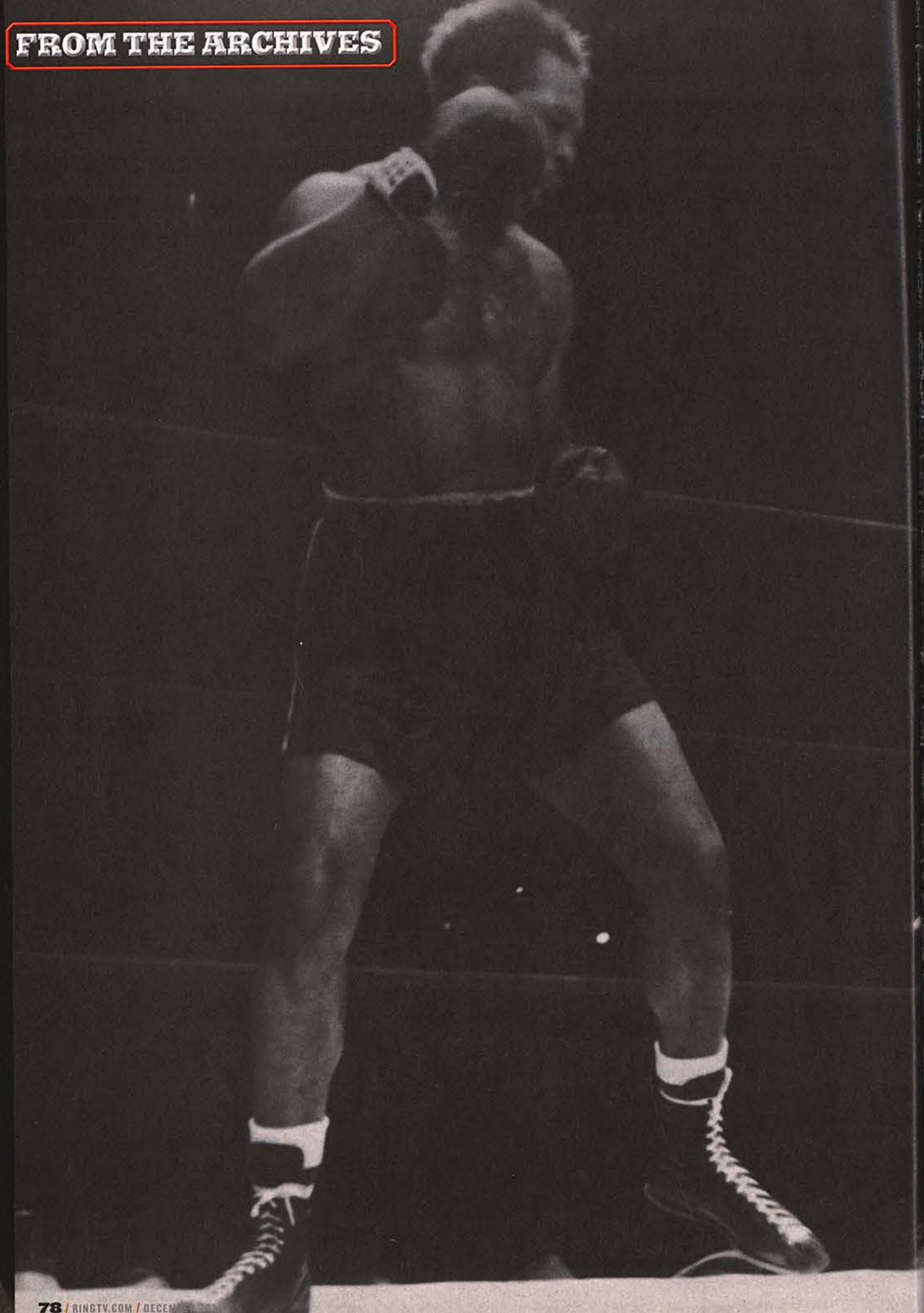

MOORE POWER TO YOU

"The Old Mongoose," Archie Moore, drops reigning heavyweight champion of the world Rocky Marciano with a stunning counter right in the second round of their 1955 showdown. Moore, three years into a 10-year title reign at light heavyweight, was attempting to become the first 175-pound king to capture glory in the heavyweight division. Alas, "The Rock" regrouped to wear Moore down, flooring the 39-year-old challenger (who was as old as 42, according to some record books) four times en route to a brutal ninth-round knockout. This was the final professional fight for Marciano, who retired seven months later with a perfect record of 49-0 (43 knockouts).

COMING UP

Povetkin and Whyte will touch gloves once again on November 21. Will it be repeat or revenge?

OCTOBER

OCT. 23 – Juan Francisco Estrada vs. Carlos Cuadras, junior bantamweights (for Estrada's Ring/WBC titles), Mexico City (DAZN). Also, Roman Gonzalez vs. Israel Gonzalez, junior bantamweights (for Gonzalez's WBA title).
OCT. 24 – Gervonta Davis vs. Leo Santa Cruz, lightweights (for Davis' WBA lightweight/Santa Cruz's WBA junior lightweight titles), Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime/PBC pay-per-view).
OCT. 31 – Naoya Inoue vs. Jason Moloney, bantamweights (for Inoue's Ring/IBF/WBA titles), Las Vegas (ESPN+).
OCT. 31 – Aleksandr Usyk vs. Dereck Chisora, heavyweights, U.K. (DAZN).

NOVEMBER

NOV. 3 – Hiroto Kyoguchi vs. Thanongsak Simsri, junior flyweights (for Kyoguchi's Ring/WBA titles), Osaka, Japan.
NOV. 21 – Errol Spence Jr. vs. Danny Garcia, welterweights (for Spence's IBF/WBC titles), location TBA (Fox pay-per-view).
NOV. 21 – Alexander Povetkin vs. Dillian Whyte 2, heavyweights, London (DAZN).
NOV. 28 – Mike Tyson vs. Roy Jones Jr., heavyweights (exhibition), Carson, California (pay-per-view).

DECEMBER

DEC. 12 – Anthony Joshua vs. Kubrat Pulev, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF/WBA/WBO titles), London (DAZN). Also, Lawrence Okolie vs. Krzysztof Glowacki, cruiserweights.
DEC. 12 – Nordine Oubaali vs. Nonito Donaire, bantamweights (for Oubaali's WBC title), Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime).

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